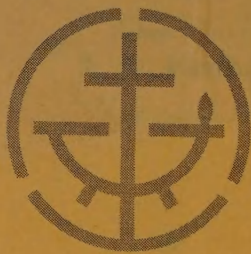


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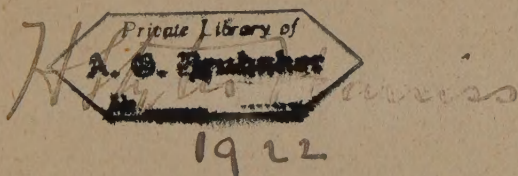
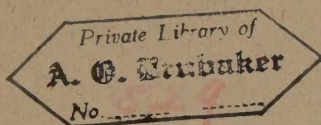


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PERMANENT ELEMENTS IN
CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY

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PERMANENT ELEMENTS
IN
CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY

BY
REV. R. J. WARDELL

*Author of 'Studies in Homiletics,'
'Highways in Bookland,' &c.*

New York: EATON & MAINS
Cincinnati: JENNINGS & GRAHAM

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PREFACE

THIS book makes no pretence to be either an exhaustive or a comprehensive treatment of theology. It is nothing more than *the substance* of a Methodist Preacher's message to his congregation during one winter of his ministry.

One of the most encouraging signs of the times in recent months has been the new interest taken by all classes of people in the general subject of theology; and the author has attempted to make some of the main elements of the gospel plain and potent to the average man to whom textbooks on theology are an abhorrence, but who is vaguely conscious of the impact of the currents of modern thought.

It is the author's general habit to leave outside the pulpit all matters of 'criticism' and all matters of 'controversy,' and to deal with them, as far as may be necessary and as far as he is able to do so, from the desk in the lecture-hall on a week-night. For this reason all such questions are, as far as possible, left out of this book.

The subjects are all foundation principles of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, and they are approximately arranged in the order which is usually followed in Manuals of Theology.

The author expects it to be taken for granted that he owes an immeasurable debt to all sorts of books and all sorts of writers; but he would like to state that the greatest debt of his life, a debt which can never be repaid, he owes to the Methodist Church for his training in the Theological College at Richmond from 1885 to 1889. It was there that the windows of truth were opened for him, and there that he was taught to look with reverent gaze into the unsearchable riches of God's infinite nature and His redeeming activities in Christ Jesus. To one of his old Tutors he has ventured to dedicate this book of theology in grateful acknowledgement of that fact.

Thanks are due to Dr. A. E. Gregory for allowing some matter to be used which has appeared in *The Preacher's Magazine*.

WESLEYAN CHURCH,
BARRY ROAD, LONDON, S.E.

CONTENTS

CONCERNING CHRIST AND HIS KINGDOM.

THE ETERNAL PREFACE	11
THE STAR IN THE EAST	17
THE GOSPEL OF THE GLORY	26
THE KING OF HUMBLE BIRTH	34
THE TRUTH COMING THROUGH THE PERSON	42

CONCERNING CHRIST'S MESSAGE.

<i>Sin</i> NOT NATURAL TO MAN	53
A PRACTICAL VIEW OF <i>Temptation</i>	62
THE FIRST WORD : <i>Repentance</i>	70
THE CARDINAL WORD : <i>Forgiveness</i>	78
THE BENEDICTION : <i>Peace with God</i>	88
THE IMPERATIVE CONDITION : <i>Saving Faith</i>	96
PHASES OF <i>Faith</i>	103
THE GREAT GUARDIAN : <i>Providence</i>	113
BRUISED REEDS AND SMOKING WICKS : <i>The Value</i> <i>of the Soul</i>	122

CONCERNING CHRIST'S GIFTS.

THE HIGHER LIFE : <i>The New Birth</i>	133
'MORE ABUNDANTLY' : <i>Growth in Grace</i>	140
THE FRIEND IN NEED : <i>The Holy Spirit</i>	148

CONCERNING CHRIST'S DISCIPLES.

THE HALL-MARK OF A CHRISTIAN	163
CHRISTIAN EGOISM	172
FIT FOR THE KINGDOM	180
SELF-HELP IN SALVATION	189

CONCERNING CHRIST'S PURPOSES.

PERFECT MEN	199
A SAVED WORLD	210

CONCERNING THE CROSS, THE JUDGEMENT,
AND THE BETTER LIFE.

THE SACRED PLACE OF THE MOST HIGH	223
AFTER DEATH : <i>The Judgement</i>	232
THE LIFE TO COME	243

CONCERNING CHRIST AND HIS KINGDOM

THE ETERNAL PREFACE

THE STAR IN THE EAST

THE GOSPEL OF THE GLORY

THE KING OF HUMBLE BIRTH

THE TRUTH COMING THROUGH THE PERSON

THE ETERNAL PREFACE

And when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son.—Gal. iv. 4.

THE projecting emphasis in this statement is in the word translated 'fullness.' That word tells us the birth of Jesus was unique because it filled full the chalice of God's self-revelation in the history of humanity. It suggests that the history of the world was a history of moral and religious expansion, and that the coming of the Son of God did not take place till the process had reached a certain climax. It indicates that nothing began at Bethlehem, but that something which had existed from the foundation of the world was made manifest. The birth of Jesus was no unnatural break in the history of mind and morals, but a focusing and incarnating of truths and principles and facts which had existed in the nature of God and in the heart of humanity ever since God and Man stood in relationship.

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

There are several recognized ways of illustrating this truth, but there is one way peculiarly suitable for our day and generation. In recent years a new science has been coming to the front. It is known as the science of Ethnology, with its companion science of Comparative Religion. Amongst other things the men who pursue this science take for granted the existence at the present day, in close juxtaposition with our own civilization, races of men who, at all events but a few generations ago, lived under the same conditions as primitive tribes and races in prehistoric times. It seems inevitable that ere long these interesting populations will become extinct. Men of science therefore attempt to preserve a knowledge of their habits and languages, and from a study of their myths and traditions, their religious customs, prejudices, and ceremonies, to find out what were the essential ideas of man in the earliest times before written history began. Some really startling facts have been brought to light in reference to religion. A long series of such facts are described in Professor James Drummond's *Introduction to the Study of Religion*. Amongst them is the apparently indisputable fact that how-

The Eternal Preface

ever far you travel back towards the head waters of the history of humanity, you do not find a race of men anywhere that has not believed in a supernatural or virgin birth, and in the incarnation of a supernatural person, which means that the spirit of a divine power makes a home in a man's body. Another such fact is the idea or principle of atonement. When the first Roman Catholic missionaries went to Mexico they found something exactly corresponding to the Christian Eucharist amongst people who had never heard of Christianity before, and the only theory these missionaries could form of the practice was that the devil was making a wicked parody of the most sacred Christian rite.¹ But now the fact appears to be that the nearer historical research gets to the scenes of the infancy of the human race the more sure do scientific men become that these two ideas or principles of incarnation and atonement were deep-seated and far-reaching in the minds of primitive men.

The inspired writer who used this word 'fullness' suggests the true explanation of all this. God is

¹ See Dr. Moulton's *How God Prepared for Christianity*.

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

the good Father of all men. What He is He was from the beginning. He left not Himself without witness in any race. These instincts or ideas were His witnesses, and He caused them to grow or evolve in the minds and hearts of primitive men just as He caused the stars and the earth to evolve; and these ideas had evolved in the minds and hearts of the people out of whom emerged that wonderful race with a genius for religion which began with Abraham, the father of the faithful. The vocation of Israel and her service to humanity consisted in the fact that the mind and heart of the race formed fruitful ground for the growth of such principles of religion. To receive and use them and develop them for the benefit of mankind was in the line of Hebrew endowment and opportunity. This development is mirrored for us in the pages of the Old Testament, the unique literature of the people of Israel. In those sacred pages we see, amid much that we cannot fully understand, how vague instinct grew into an assured conviction that the God enthroned in heaven would appear upon the earth, and appear both as a Revealer and a Redeemer.

The Eternal Preface

Vainly I seek to know his mind
Who smote the lamb with gleaming knife
And sprinkled blood, and hoped to find
The peace of a diviner life:
But o'er the vague, vast chasm that parts
Their thoughts from mine I cannot go;
I wot not how their troubled hearts
Were calmed by making blood to flow,
And yet the Lamb of God was slain,
Or ere the age of sin began,
And wrapped in that prophetic pain,
Is all the history of man;
And all the fullness of his life,
And all the greatness of his thought,
And all the peace of his long strife,
Root in the everlasting ought.¹

‘Root in the everlasting ought.’ Something like that is meant when we are told that ‘God sent forth His Son in *the fullness of the time*,’ and the gospel only takes on for us its full significance when we think of Jesus as the heir of all things. We gain much by recognizing frankly and fully that the gospel has its roots planted deep in the universal heart of human nature. For:

It establishes our confidence that in putting our trust in the gospel we are clinging to something which has foundations in the very substance of our universe. [Every age has a new theology.] Every

¹ W. C. Smith.

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

age needs a new theology. Every age has its own social problems, and social revolutions must come to pass. Theories of inspiration are sometimes born in a day and pass away in a night. But Jesus Christ is 'the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.' His gospel *must* abide

As long as the heart has sorrows,
And as long as life has woes,

for it is part of the essence of things, and it was *the eternal intention* of God that men should know Him and be redeemed from the weakness of misery and sin.

It also inspires our hope for the future of humanity. For if the gospel has its roots deep in the common human heart it must sooner or later touch the human heart in every part of the world; and we may with good reason cherish the hope that the day shall come when 'the sun shall rise in the east and set in the west, and shed his light across this little globe, and nowhere shall he see man crush his fellow.' When

Jesus shall reign where'er the sun
Doth his successive journeys run;
His kingdom stretch from shore to shore,
Till suns shall rise and set no more.

THE STAR IN THE EAST

Lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.—Matt. ii. 9.

THERE are many features of the story of the Wise Men and the Star which it would be intellectually interesting to consider at length. There are the questions connected with the Wise Men themselves, such as: Who were they? Whence did they come? Why did they come? One ancient and popular tradition says that they were three kings who came from the Indian hills, who were not only kings but astrologers; but whether they were kings or subjects, or how many of them there were, the narrative in the New Testament does not say. All it does suggest is that they were wealthy men, or they could not have brought such costly presents to the infant Jesus; and they were men of influence, or they could not have demanded an audience from King Herod and secured courteous treatment at his hands.

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

Then there are questions connected with the star, such as: Was it a fixed star? Was it a planet? Was it a conjunction of planets? One ancient and beautiful tradition says it was a new star, or at least a star the wise men had never seen in the sky before. It was 'A strange white Star' that

burst suddenly
New from the spangled purple of the Night
Illumining the world.¹

St. Ignatius, the great Bishop of Antioch, who was torn in pieces by lions in A.D. 107, said that in order to make manifest to the ages the mystery of the gospel 'a star shone forth in the heaven above all the stars, and its light was unutterable, and its strangeness caused amazement, and all the rest of the constellations with the sun and moon formed themselves into a chorus about the star; but the star itself far outshone them all, and there was perplexity to know whence came this strange appearance which was so unlike them. From that time forward every sorcery and every spell was dissolved, the ignorance of wickedness vanished away, the ancient kingdom was pulled down, when God appeared in

¹ Sir E. Arnold.

The Star in the East

the likeness of man unto newness of everlasting life, and that which had been perfected in the counsels of God began to take effect.'

I have mentioned these matters for the sake of illustrating the sort of question with which a preacher, as a *preacher*, has nothing to do. They are fit subjects for academical research, and the pulpit is no fit place for such research, nor for the discussion of questions which are based upon it. The province of a preacher is to search for and to represent the essential and permanent spiritual truth which underlies all the historic events of Holy Scripture. Whatever, therefore, historical scholarship may have to say about the Wise Men and the Star, the simple story of a number of men seeing the gleam of the star of Jesus from afar, and following the 'beamed token of a Teacher born,' till at those little feet they laid their gifts in the act and spirit of worship, is a picture full of beauty and of truth for all men throughout all time. It is a similar picture that is drawn for us by the aged poet Tennyson in his poem, 'Merlin and the Gleam.' 'I am Merlin,' said the old man—

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

I am Merlin,
And I am dying,
I am Merlin,
Who follow the gleam.

Then he proceeds to tell how, in early boyhood's days,

In early summers,
Over the mountain,
On human faces,
And all around me,
Moving to melody,
Floated the gleam.

In the dawn of manhood, when

A demon vext me,
The light retreated,
The lanskip darkened,
The melody deadened,
The Master whispered,
Follow the gleam.

When true love looked into his life and the fairies danced

In desolate hollows,
By warble of water,
Or cataract music
Of falling torrents,
Flitted the gleam.

Then when life became a dull plod along a level plain,

The Star in the East

Down from the mountain,
And over the level,
And streaming and shining on,
Slided the gleam.

Till at length it led him

To the city and palace
Of Arthur the king;
And last on the forehead
Of Arthur the blameless
Rested the gleam.

And when at last death drew near, and the ' mortal
hillock ' came into full view,

There on the border
Of boundless Ocean,
And all but in heaven
Hovers the gleam.

And the old man calls on all the mariners on life's
ocean to follow the gleam

Not of the sunlight !
Not of the moonlight !
Not of the starlight !
After it, follow it,
Follow the gleam.

I fancy that poem gets nearer to the heart of the
truth which is for us all in the story of the Wise
Men and the Star than we are ever likely to get

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

by any purely scientific method of historic research. Substitute Jesus for 'Arthur,' and the caravansery at Bethlehem for 'the city and palace of Arthur,' and, like Tennyson, we may say that we, too, have seen the gleam of His star in the east. We saw it in those baby days when we used to rest in the laps of our mothers in the gloaming, and were taught to say,

Jesus, tender Shepherd, hear me;
Bless Thy little lamb to-night;
Through the darkness be Thou near me;
Keep me safe till morning light.

And again and again since childhood's days at some crisis or other in our experience we have caught a glimpse of that gleam which by its 'mild persistence has drawn our souls to loftier heights of virtue.' And to-day, and always,

All round about our feet shall shine
A light like that the wise men saw,
If we our loving wills incline
To that sweet life which is the law.

In other and more prosaic words, the gleam of the star which shines for us all on the beaten track of daily life is the inner light which shineth in every

The Star in the East

man coming into the world; and whosoever willeth to be led by its guiding gleam shall be led to Him who is the light of life. That light is limited neither by nationality nor by creed. It is within every human being. It commands every man's loyalty. The only danger is that it may be obscured by the driving gloom of sin. But if a man will let the window of his soul be clean and tear away the blinds of selfishness, he shall not walk in darkness.

The truth finds abundant illustration in the pages of biography. Here is one illustration. In the lectures of F. W. Robertson there is one which contains a sketch of his own inner life. Along with some friends, he had started a Working Men's Institute at Brighton, and the tendency towards infidelity had shown itself among the members. Robertson felt called upon to address them. In his address he laid bare to them the heart of his own religious experience. He told them what awful depths of despondency he had been through, what anguish of soul, what darkness of black night. Said he, 'It is an awful hour, let him who has passed through it say how awful, when this life has

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

lost its meaning and seems shrivelled into a span, when the grave appears to be the end of all and human goodness nothing but a name, when the sky above this universe is but a dead expanse, black with the void from which God Himself has disappeared.' Then he told them how, even in that awful time, he said to himself, 'If there be no God, and if there be no future, even then it is better to be generous than to be selfish, better to be chaste than to be licentious, better to be true than to be false, better to be brave than to be a coward.' Following these mighty moralities he was gradually led towards the light, till at length he saw the star of Jesus begin to shine. 'No one,' said he, 'whoever lived would say that *His* life was not the highest and truest life, the most generous and chaste and gentle the world has ever seen.' By patiently following the way of Christ's life he was led to be loyal to the Person and doctrine of the Redeemer, and came to live in the fullness of perfect rest in Him. By the gleam of the inner light he was brought to the Christ of God. There are scores of similar illustrations which might be given, but they would only overlay the point I wish to

The Star in the East

make so clear, that whosoever in any place or nation follows the gleam of right and truth and purity and duty, and doeth the will of God as far as it is known to him in each day as it comes, shall not fail to catch the glow of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. 'Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world; he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.'

Follow you that star which lights a desert pathway,
yours and mine;
Forward till you see the highest human nature is divine.

THE GOSPEL OF THE GLORY

The glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.—
2 Cor. iv. 6.

‘THE glory of God’ is the light of His self-revelation considered as evoking the adoration and praise of those who behold it. And ‘the face of Jesus’ puts in brief the story of Jesus from the manger to the empty grave. There, in that life-story, is the shining apex of all the light of the revelations of Himself which God has granted to men.

In the Old Testament we read that there is a glory of God set upon the heavens above, a self-revelation of God’s power and His wisdom. We who live in modern days, and can read what those men say who have the power to use the telescope and the spectroscope, have a revelation of God’s power and wisdom set upon the heavens above incomparably vaster than the men of the old world saw. The astronomers tell us of fifty millions of stars as being visible through the

The Gospel of the Glory

telescope in 'that great and awful city of God,' each star a mighty sun probably with its own system of planets. One astronomer says that if we could imagine God sending an angel to find this world amid those starry hosts, it would be like as if a man were to send a tiny child to find one grain of sand at the root of some one blade of grass growing in the far-stretching prairies of America. When we hear and read such statements, the glory of God which is set upon the heavens appears before us with a vastness too stupendous for our minds to grasp, and the man who has only the veriest smattering of astronomy often feels

The intolerable vastness bow him down,
The awful homeless spaces scare his soul.

In the Old Testament we read, too, that 'the earth itself is full of the glory of the Lord.' How true that is he knows who has seen the moonlight on snow-capped mountains, the upleaping glories of the dawn, or the red wine of the sunset mixed with the purple of the dark in the gold cup of the west; or who has read of the works of God, who worketh hitherto and everywhere, perfecting the tiny petal of the tiny flower, moulding with faultless exacti-

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

tude the crystals of the snowflakes which fall and lie and melt away amid the silence that is in the lonely hills, fashioning into harmonious adaptation to their surroundings the innumerable living things that move and breathe.

The Almighty maker has throughout
Discriminated each from each, by strokes
And touches of His hand, with so much art
Diversified—that two are never found
Twin at all points.

But while the Old Testament tells us that there is one manifestation of the glory of God to be seen in the heavens above us, and another to be discerned in the earth around us, the New Testament assures us that *the* glory of God, the glowing centre of all the glory with which God has flooded the world, that revelation of Himself which outshines all other self-revelations, is not to be found in the heavens above, nor in the earth beneath. These set before us for our admiration and amazement His power and His wisdom and His majesty. The *Glory* of God is elsewhere. It is to be found in 'the old, old story of Jesus and His love.' We have heard that story told a hundred times and thought of it a thousand, but the majesty

The Gospel of the Glory

and glory, the tenderness and power of the story we shall not grasp if we hear and read it a thousand times more. Think of the brief, bare outline. On a long distant winter's evening, in a far-away land, Jesus stepped across the threshold of this mortal life, born of a poor woman for whom there was no room in a wayside inn at the time of her distress. Saved from the massacre of the innocents by the love of Joseph and Mary, He was rocked to sleep in a workshop and awaked by the sound of carpenter's tools. Around and within His boyhood's home were all the signs of poverty and hardship. Industry alone kept the wolf from the door. For long years He toiled and earned His bread by the sweat of His brow. Then for three years He went about the cities and villages of His native land doing good; always impoverished, but never pitied, helping the right who suffered wrong, feeding hungry people, giving sight to blind people, lifting up fallen people, comforting the fatherless and the widow, the disheartened and unconsidered. Helpless and stricken people appealed to Him for help, and were never sent empty away. Guilty men and women, made miserable by conscience and

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

haunted by remorse, besought Him for forgiveness, and were blessed with peace. And after three years of such effort He was classed among outcasts, and put to death with all the marks of shame, amid the howlings of a vulgar mob and the jealousy of offended priests. There, in that sacred story of beneficence, humiliation, suffering and death, shines forth brighter than anywhere else the light of God's self-revelation for the wonder and adoration of men. Not in the boundless sweep of the constellations, nor in the earth dainty with the bloom of flowers and overarched with glowing canopies of translucent clouds; but *there*, in the life-story of Him who went about in the lowly garb of a Galilean peasant, so patient and meek and gentle, despised and rejected of men, is to be seen THE GLORY OF GOD.

If that be so, then *the* glory of God consists in pouring the joy of forgiveness into hearts that are dreary and desolate because of sin. If that be so, then God does not hold aloof from mortals caring not what they suffer, but *He cares*, and we may 'smile to think God's greatness lies around our incompleteness, round our restlessness His

The Gospel of the Glory

rest.' If that be so, we are not to look for His glory in the unwearied might of His exhaustless energy, nor in the wisdom that covers the heavens and has no borderland of ignorance; but we are to look for it in the love manifested in coming out of the darkness of His Immensity to show Himself as the Man of Sorrows, and to fill all the dark places of man's life with light.

This is a gospel so wonderful that there have always been men—men, too, who live virtuous lives, and are men of careful thought and honest purpose, and sometimes men who have a deep feeling of reverence for God and admiration for Jesus Christ—who think that it is too extraordinary to be true. It staggers them. They think it irreverent and presumptuous to say that the Almighty King of Heaven, who fills the stellar immensities with the splendour of His Presence, should find His greatest glory in forgiving the sins and healing the wounds of minute and fleeting men upon this poor mean earth. They suggest that the very notion is shocking to any proper conception of the absolute majesty of Him in whom all things live and move and have their being. But the fact is that instead

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

of being too wonderful to be true it is too extraordinary to be false. Instead of being irreverent to say it of God, it would be blasphemy not to say it. For consider two arguments which have been spoken or lain unuttered in many minds throughout many ages: *First*, that a greatness that is great enough can always stoop very low without loss either of dignity or majesty; and that when real and not sham greatness does so stoop it always adds lustre to its glory. There is a popular picture of Lord Roberts, during the time of the South African war, sitting at a table in his tent with a little child upon his knee while a dispatch rider stands waiting at the tent door with papers in his hand and a look of impatience on his face. Imagine the two principal figures reversed, the dispatch rider in the place of the commander-in-chief, and the picture loses all its glory and grace. The General, just because he was so great, could afford to stoop to amuse a child. Instead of losing his glory he enhanced it by doing so. The private soldier would have lost any greatness he might have had by doing so in such circumstances. Because the General really was great he could bend to a child,

The Gospel of the Glory

and his bending exalts him the more. So we may say with lowly reverence that if God were less than the King of Heaven, to think that the central blaze of His glory was in the life-story of Jesus would be to belittle Him; but because He is the 'Almighty Monarch of Immensity' He can stoop right down to men, and such stooping gives splendour to His all-glorious name. *The second argument* runs thus: All men would admit that if God is to be in any real sense God to us we must think of Him as *good* in addition to being great. And by goodness we mean that disposition which causes a strong man to go out from himself and identify himself with a weak man for the weak man's benefit. We dare not say that men who do so are better than God. To say that would be blasphemy indeed. Yet that is what it must come to unless we have some transcendent illustration of His grace and condescension which has no other earthly parallel. And where can we find such an illustration unless it be in the story of the incarnation?

Oh, do but touch His garment's fold,
And see the heavenly alchemist transform
Life's very dust to gold.

THE KING OF HUMBLE BIRTH

Pilate therefore said unto Him, Art Thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest it because I am a king. To this end have I been born, and to this end am I come into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth.—John xviii. 37, R.V. margin.

No wonder the civil trial of Jesus has appealed so strongly to the imagination of the artist. The contrast between Jesus, the embodiment of one sort of power, and Pilate, the representative of another sort of power, is dramatic. The stern autocrat sits on his judgement seat, able and effective, surrounded with all the pomp and circumstance of worldly power, with legions of willing soldiers ready to obey his word. Jesus stands before him, surrounded by an angry mob who are howling for His death while jealous and offended priests rain false charges upon Him. He is bound with thongs, forsaken of every friend, a lonely outcast. The most serious charge the priests had brought against Him was that He had made Himself a king. He

The King of Humble Birth

was called upon by Pilate to rebut that charge. He did so completely, showing that He envied not the throned monarch, neither his sceptre nor his sword. Nevertheless, He did claim a kingdom, and asserted that He was born to be a king.

Much of the essential and permanent interest which this trial of Jesus before Pilate contains is to be found in that claim and in the statement of Jesus about the nature of His kingship. That is the subject of our study now.

Our starting-point is the word '*king*.' Etymology tells us that originally and primarily that word meant the leader or chief of a tribe or nation. The ideas of authority and ruling are secondary. A king who really is a king in the true sense of the word announces and orders because he leads or goes ahead. He is the controlling man because he is the foremost man. He is supreme because he is superior. Jesus was a '*king*'—*in that sense only*. In the secondary sense of governing or ruling the word has very little reference to Him. In so far as He is ruler and governor, He is so as the natural and necessary result of His leadership. Moreover, the sphere of His kingship is the sphere

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology of the spirit. 'My kingdom,' said He, 'is not of this world.' It is not merely or mainly that He did not claim and use the power of the sword, but that the secular and material were not the objects of His *direct* effort. It is quite startling, in these days of Socialism, to consider the reticence of Jesus in dealing with social reform. In His day 'slavery was an institution; drunkenness was common and not forbidden; the punishments wreaked upon criminals were of the most degrading kind; the prisons were in fearful plight; the poor were often shut into conditions which made leprosy and other diseases inevitable. The rich had vices which shortened life and injured their children; the treatment of the sick was absurd, the treatment of leprosy inhuman. Cruelty in all departments was the commonplace of life. Sharp practice and corruption in public and private business was the rule. The marriage customs were lax; their violation was common. When do we ever see Him, with His righteous heart vexed into burning words, publicly denouncing one or all of these crying evils?' ¹ It is not possible to think that He

¹ *Pro Christo et Ecclesia.*

The King of Humble Birth

was not alive to these things, and the sight of them must have caused more pain to His compassionate heart than any such sight could ever give any other man. Yet, if we except His gracious healing of a few sick people, He made no *direct* effort to deal with them, and gave no express directions with regard to them. The reason was that His kingdom was not of this world. He had come on purpose *to bear witness to the truth*. What society needed was not reorganizing, but *renewing in the spirit of the mind*. There are two ways of removing diseases. The popular one is to destroy them by direct action. The scientific one is to make them impossible by increasing the life. There are two ways of cleansing a foul city. There is the cleansing of the scavenger, and there is the cleansing of the medical expert who directs the engineer. One removes filth. The other puts new mind into the city's life. Jesus came that men might have truth and life. Every sphere of human activity is His dominion because His realm was the personal, inward, and spiritual. By His whole ministry He cried, 'I am come as a witness to the truth, and the truth shall make you free.'

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

Our next step is to the word '*witness*,' which tells us that He came, not as an ordinary man, to discover truth by the exercise of observation and reflection, but as a visitant to earth coming from the Father to make manifest the truth He had brought from that secret place. He came 'no more in the glory of the scientific or intellectual order than in the glory of the earthly state.' He came not to enlarge the range of knowledge in the departments of human research, nor to describe the events, past and future, of human history. He came from out that

Inner world, where Science lifts her torch,
And glorious links we see of heavenly mould,
But cannot break the chain,

to bear testimony to the things inseparable from the Spirit. That testimony was borne not simply by what He said and what He did, but by what He was. It was found in the harmony of His will and words and works. His nature was radiant with the indwelling truth; and all who see and hear and have fellowship with Him, unless their eyes and ears are holden, know that the truth is in Him. Every one that is of the truth heareth His voice.

The King of Humble Birth

His testimony was limited by the forms and conditions in which the thoughts of men worked to whom it was given. 'There was a certain circle of ideas which He accepted in becoming man, in the same way in which He accepted a particular language with its grammar and vocabulary.' For example, He quoted the 110th Psalm as if it had been written by David, whereas the student of history feels sure that though the Jews in Christ's day thought it had been written by David, as a matter of fact they were mistaken. This is but one illustration out of a multitude of the way in which the witness of Jesus was limited and conditioned by the forms of thought into which he had to pour His witness. All matters of mere scholarship are wholly irrelevant to His mission. He came not to correct nor to demonstrate, but to illumine by His life.

Our next step is into the word '*truth*,' which in the abstract may be said to be conformity between the witness and the reality. Words are true when they convey to the mind an idea which corresponds with reality. The ultimate realities in the universe are the personality of God and the personality of

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

Man. Hence 'The Truth' to which Jesus witnessed consists in the coincidence between Himself and the character of God on the one hand and the divine idea in man on the other. In Him the realities inseparable from the personalities of God and Man were correctly set forth.

I shall attempt to present a more elaborate analysis of the contents of the truth which was in Jesus in my next chapter, for this is now long enough. It has been little more than an explanation of three big words, but it will not have been fruitless if it has served to teach us two most important lessons.

The first is that our true relationship to the King is not expressed by the word submission, but by the word self-surrender. Christ is not a tyrannical monarch who commands men to comply with His will, but a King who invites them to follow Him. He does not break men's wills and override their judgements, but asks for their co-operation. His call comes to us from the heights of His incomparable supremacy, 'He that *followeth Me* shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.'

The second is that the truth to which Jesus bears

The King of Humble Birth

witness is not contradictory to any truths discovered by critical science; but it transcends them all. It has been compared to a crystal which, according as it is held and turned, permits us to see the colour of the earth it has been found in, or else displays the golden glory of the sun in purest ethereal splendour. It comes to us in the thought-forms of a bygone age and another race of men; and whatever the human intellect may have to say about those thought-forms, the truth is timeless, bright with the light of the eternal, concerned only with the unchanging essence, and lifted so far above all mere knowledge, that Jesus Himself could utter the solemn words, 'Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away.'

THE TRUTH COMING THROUGH THE PERSON

The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto Him, Rabbi, we know that Thou art a teacher come from God.—John iii. 2.

WHEN Nicodemus acknowledged the Lord as a teacher he appears to have thought of Him as belonging to the same order as other teachers whom he knew. In that he was in error. All other teachers have learnt what they have known of the ultimate Reality by contemplating it from without, but this teacher bore witness to what He had experienced from within. All other teachers try to convince by argument; He lays bare in His character and conduct a secret to be read by every sincere and reverent soul. Other teachers teach by their words; He teaches by what He was. Other teachers appeal to the intellect; His appeal is to the personality. The disciples of other teachers said, 'That which we have heard and learnt declare

The Truth coming through the Person

we unto you.' The apostles of Jesus said, 'That which we have seen with our eyes, that which we have heard, that which we beheld and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life, of that we bear witness and declare unto you.' As we have already seen, Christ's supremacy lay distinctively in the realm of those truths which are inseparable from personality, and more especially is He our Teacher because He discloses to us the final truth about God's character, about the divine idea for Man, and about the relation between them. To use the words of Bishop Westcott, He is our supreme witness to the truth because He is 'the perfect revelation of the Father, the perfect pattern of life, and expressed in act and word the absolute law of love.' Let us take these details one by one.

1. *Jesus discloses the truth about God's character.* As God He reveals God. In Nature there are signs of Power. The ultimates in that region a generation ago were Matter and Force. The wise men of this generation have gone a step beyond, and tell us that in Nature there are signs of a presiding intelligence at work controlling and directing and driving forward the machinery of the

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

universe. But whatever signs of power or wisdom the human spirit may discover in the world of Nature, it is inevitable that Nature can never unveil for us the *character* of the Most High any more than a steam engine can reveal to us the character of the man who designed it. The attributes of character or personality can only be disclosed through a person. To reveal the character of God the person must be human, or men would not understand it. He must also be superhuman, or God would not be shown through Him. Jesus said, 'He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.' No one with the Gospels in his hand would ever dream of saying that in Jesus we can see God's omnipotence or God's omniscience. These attributes of the Deity are wholly irrelevant. Jesus never claimed to have them; but He did claim to give us, and in His words and works and person He did give us, the nearest equivalent to the inner reality of God's moral character that mortal mind can grasp. 'No man,' said He, 'cometh unto *the Father* but by Me.' And it is just that about God which the human heart most needs to know. It is said that during the time of the Civil War in America,

The Truth coming through the Person

at a time when the President was harassed and weary, his little boy, who had been fighting with another boy outside the White House and got hurt, walked into the council chamber where the great men of the State were sitting, and looking about him in his trouble, said simply, 'I want my father.' A great statesman tried to comfort him, but he said, 'I want my father.' A famous general tried to console him, but he still said, 'I want my father.' A judge tried to soothe him, but the child still cried, 'I want my father,' and it was not until he found his father that he was calmed and comforted. Men and women are the grown-up children of the great All-Father. Life is a struggle for all of them, and a very hard struggle for some. We all get hard knocks and sore wounds in the fight. Our hearts are often sick, and when we carry smiles on our faces we are sometimes full of tears within. We have an instinct which tells us we came out of the bosom of the Infinite, and what we want for help and comfort is Our Father in heaven. It is not enough for wise men to point to Nature and say, 'There is Almighty Power.' We do not want power, we want 'Our Father.' It

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

will not do for them to tell us to read history and see there the signs of the operations of a Moral Governor. We are afraid of a moral governor. We want 'Our Father.' And the greatness and glory of the gospel, that which makes the incarnation a power to move the world and to save it, is that it shows us where and how to find the Being who is for us the embodiment of fatherhood and motherhood at once.

2. *Jesus discloses the truth about God's idea for Man.* He is moral manhood at its highest. As well might a mariner try to sail his ship beyond the horizon as a moralist try to get beyond the human character of Jesus, for it was sinless. Whole books have been written on different phases of the character of the Lord, illustrating the fact that His personality was free from every element, either distinctively Jewish, or Greek, or Roman, embracing every type of manhood, and not only of manhood but of womanhood also, and manifesting every separate characteristic of the true, the beautiful, and the good. But all the books together do not say more than is wrapped in the short statement that *He was sinless.* And we are never going to

The Truth coming through the Person

be assured that Jesus was actually sinless by an attempt to tabulate and arrange His virtues. Neither shall we be convinced of it by any argument whatever. 'I know Christ,' said Robert Browning, 'by the direct glance of the soul's seeing, as the eye sees the light.' And to know Jesus to be sinless the soul of each of us must see His Soul. To do that is possible. It is generally acknowledged that Boswell's *Life of Johnson* is one of the most wonderful of biographies, because it lets us into the secret places of the life of the man. We see the Doctor himself. It is just as generally acknowledged that the narratives in the New Testament do the same for us in regard to Jesus. They open for us the secret places of His life. No man can read those stories with an open mind, which is also lowly and reverent, without having a deep impression that he sees a type of morality different from any other. The difference consists in the absence of that moral element we call sin and the presence in perfection of that which we call goodness. If any one desires to see this process described in detail let him read *The Christ of History and Experience*,

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

by Dr. Forrest. It is in such a personal contact with the personality of Jesus that we have the guarantee that He disclosed the truth that sin is not an inherent characteristic of human nature, but an intrusion, and that by what He was He taught not only that the Divine Nature is Love, but that *human nature is great.*

3. *Jesus discloses the truth about the law of love.* 'He emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant.' That statement might be used as a headline for every one of the pages which tell the story of His life. Wherever there was a mourner to be comforted, an ignorant man to be enlightened, a conscience-stricken woman to be set at rest, a fear-laden child to be calmed, or a sick person to be healed, there He was as a servant. The most significant point in it all is this: in such actions He appeals not merely to the sense of duty to promote another's well-being, which is natural to every man, but to the deepest aspect of personality, which feels everything human to be akin to itself. The law of service is turned by Jesus into the spontaneous outburst of love. 'The true characteristic of the teaching of Jesus is none other than this:

The Truth coming through the Person

it abrogates law and puts spontaneous affection in its place.' This effect was produced not merely by giving a 'New Commandment,' but also by simply and quietly 'giving up everything for the kingdom's sake—calm of home life, quiet labour at His craft, security and peace of life, the paternal roof itself. He taught not by an excited "Thus it shall be" but "Thus it is."'

If we would obey Christ's law of love our spirits must be kindled by His. There is a wonderful property in nature known as fluorescence. Certain bodies, such as the particles in luminous paint and solutions of quinine, have the property of taking in sunlight and giving it out again. If they are exposed for a time to the sun's rays they become self-luminous, and when taken into a dark place glow with a strange and beautiful light. Jesus is the Light of the World, the Sun of Righteousness, and if any man will try hard by reading and thinking and praying to let his soul lie in the glory of the light which streams from Him, the light of love shall be kindled within him and his conduct shall be a succession of unforced activities for the benefit of his brethren.

CONCERNING CHRIST'S MESSAGE

Sin NOT NATURAL TO MAN

A PRACTICAL VIEW OF *Temptation*

THE FIRST WORD: *Repentance*

THE CARDINAL WORD: *Forgiveness*

THE BENEDICTION: *Peace with God*

THE IMPERATIVE CONDITION: *Saving Faith*

PHASES OF *Faith*

THE GREAT GUARDIAN: *Providence*

BRUISED REEDS AND SMOKING WICKS: *The
Value of the Soul*

SIN NOT NATURAL TO MAN

So now it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.—Rom. vii. 17.

IN these words St. Paul gives expression to an important part of the essential and permanent significance of the sinlessness of Jesus. Sin is not integral to human nature, but an intrusion. It is something in human nature that has no human function to fulfil. To sin is to go contrary to human nature, and to yield to a destructive force which ought not to have an existence within the limits of a man's being. That is the implication of these words. Undoubtedly St. Paul learned this from the gospel of Jesus. It is one of those deep, far-reaching truths which do so much to mould thought and conduct, and yet it is a truth so easily overlaid by the modes of thought and maxims of conduct with which we are all so familiar. *The old Theology*, which set the forms of thought

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

common to our forefathers, and has done so much to influence ours, taught that men are depraved or sinful 'by nature,' that as soon as ever they obey the behests of their own natures they must of necessity fall into sin. *The New Philosophy* suggests the same idea from another point of view. It tells us that men share their natures with the brutes, that passions similar to those found amongst the animals belong to the make of human nature; but that more than all the rest, man is a rising animal, bound to rise in obedience to a law of development hidden in the secrets of his life, and that the feeling of sinfulness is the result of giving way to the passions brought up from the brute state of existence. Sin is, therefore, one of the necessary conditions of development.

Neither of these interpretations can be said to be incorrect. They err not so much by what they say as by what they leave unsaid. They are not so much false as inadequate. They do not go far enough. They are wanting in depth and insight and completeness. At least so it appears, when they are tested by the standard of gospel teaching on the subject. I will try to sum up that teaching

Sin not Natural to Man

in plain words, deeply conscious all the time that there is much about it I imperfectly realize and probably much that I wholly miss. But some things seem clear at the very least.

1. Whilst there are not less than six groups of words used in the New Testament to describe sin and its effects, broadly speaking there may be said to be *two kinds of sin*: there is the sin that is *latent* in human nature, and there is the sin that is *actual* in the individual. For the sin that is latent we are not individually responsible, but for the sin that is actual we are personally accountable. St. Paul used a very vivid figure of speech to describe the sin which is latent in human nature. He called it a dead body. In his day the Romans used to cast prisoners into dungeons chained in couples. If one of a couple died it might be days before the dead body was removed, and of course that dead body would be a horrible source of discomfort and danger to the prisoner who still remained alive. It was a figure like that which he had in mind when he wrote the words, 'Who shall deliver me from this dead body of sin?' The illustration puts vividly the fact of which every man is conscious,

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

that the nature he shares with the human race is hampered, thwarted, and fettered to something which is noxious. But it is only an illustration from that one point of view, and it tends to mislead the mind in so far as it causes us to think of this hampering tendency as outside ourselves.

The dead body is not outside us but inside. It is not found in those animal desires which we share with the brutes. Nor is it one of the products of brutes ripening through ages and millenniums. It is a state of a man's self. It is not merely a defect of will. It is a weakness or disease which affects the soul or self. And the soul or self is something deeper than the brain, more central than the heart, more diffusive than the blood; it is not a man's thoughts but behind them, not his feelings but beneath them, not his will but at the back of it. The soul or self of a man is that elusive but only real thing about a man we call personality. It is that which thinks through the brain, feels through the senses and emotions, and wills through the nerve centres, which set the body in motion. That self is *injured, defective, or diseased*, so that it is prevented from acting as it

Sin not Natural to Man

should. This is one important New Testament truth about sin.

2. *This latent disease becomes active*, and a man commits sin for which he is responsible when he knows any sort of action to be wrong and yet does it. Whenever we commit sin *we know that we do so*, for to sin is to know something to be wrong and yet do it.

See how that definition works out. Every man knows it is wrong for him to allow his animal nature to rule him. He knows that his animal desires are tools, and that he ought to use them well and manage them properly. When he fails to do so he knows he has done wrong. Every man knows, too, that it is wrong for him to choose a lower instead of a higher course. As a matter of theory, it is impossible to prove that any man has the power to choose at all; but as a matter of fact, every man knows that he has power always to choose between a higher and a lower. We know that we are all mightily influenced by the outside world and also by our relationship with the race in the present and through the past; but we also know that we are not coerced as a machine is coerced.

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

We are aware that we need not and do not obey every idea which occurs to us or every impulse that touches us. We weigh and determine those ideas and control those impulses. If any man chooses to say that he is not free in the sense that he knows the difference between the higher and the lower, and has power to choose between them, no man can argue with him. He may not be lacking in intellect, but at least he is lacking in moral sense, and is by so much less than an ordinary man. He is without the solidity and dignity that belong to normal manhood. All actual sinning is wrong choosing. It is choosing the lower in the presence of the higher.

3. *All sin, whether latent or actual, is an offence against God.* It ought not to exist. It ought never to have been. It is a source of infinite pain to God. It arouses His awful indignation. He is for ever the implacable foe of sin, working ever to destroy it.

4. *All sin is unnatural.* It no more belongs to the actual make of the human soul than smallpox belongs to the make of the body. That is proved by the sinlessness of Jesus. In the midst of the ages

Sin not Natural to Man

one man living under the same difficulties and amidst the same circumstances succeeded gloriously where the rest have failed. His spotless purity condemns it in the flesh, shows that it is not inevitable in human nature, demonstrates that it is to be conquered and transcended there. Sin is, therefore, a violation of humanity, and it is ruinous for any man to get the notion that when he does wrong he is obeying the behests of his own nature.

5. *The explanation* of this hindering and impeding element in the self is suggested by the account that at some far past point in the history of the human race man's self became poisoned, man himself took a wrong turn, and ever since, the consequences have been diffused amongst men through the operation of those mysterious principles which in modern theology are called heredity and solidarity.

6. *The remedy* for sin is the increase of life in the self. It is not to be found in drugging, but in hygiene. The life and vigour of the self is to be increased and applied to the destruction of the disease. Jesus came that men might have life and have it more abundantly. His personality and

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

work have to do with the vital dynamics of our being. We are saved by the life He gives.

Such is a summary of the substance of the New Testament teaching about sin, and for those who are craving earnestly to work out the beast there is no teaching on the subject that has yet appeared in the history of the human mind so satisfactory and so hopeful. It is fatally easy to find fault with the details of Scripture teaching on the subject, but estimated merely as a theory it commends itself as adducing a far more adequate cause and explanation for the known facts of human nature than any other theory propounded in either ancient or modern days. And as a practical method for dealing with the awful problem it simply stands without a rival.

There is no evil thing we cannot overcome.
Say not thy evil instinct is inherited,
Or that some trait inborn makes thy whole life forlorn,
And calls down punishment that is not merited.
Back of thy parents and grandparents lies
The great Eternal Will. That, too, is thine
Inheritance—strong, beautiful, divine,
Sure lever of success for one who tries.
There is no noble height thou canst not climb;
All triumphs may be thine in time's futurity,

Sin not Natural to Man

If, whatsoe'er thy fault, thou dost not faint nor halt ;
But lean upon the staff of God's security.
Sin has no claim the soul cannot contest ;
Know thyself part of the Eternal Source,
Nothing can stand before thy spirit's force ;
The soul's divine inheritance is best.

A PRACTICAL VIEW OF TEMPTATION

Each man is tempted, when he is drawn away by his own lusts, and enticed.—Jas. i. 14.

ST. JAMES has been called the 'Saxon' in the goodly company of the apostles. The epithet is suggestive. The characteristics of Saxon speech are clearness, simplicity, and force. There are no subtleties about it, and the thought is expressed in the shortest and most readily understood forms of speech. We are told by St. Peter that in St. Paul's writings there are many things hard to be understood, but in St. James he who runs may read and understand. It is generally recognized that St. John, in spite of his easy style, takes us into that inner world where the eyes of the mind are 'dazzled with celestial light.' But there is nothing mysterious about the words of St. James. He was not a deep thinker. He was a man of strong common sense. He disposed of the problems of

A Practical View of Temptation

life in the most decisive and practical way possible and then left them. That is the way in which he deals with the problem of temptation, one of the universal facts of life, and therefore one of the things everybody ought to be interested to hear about. His words suggest that the source of all temptation is in that weakness or disease of the self which leads men to yield to the enticements of those passions which are right and true and healthy when kept in their proper place.

Roughly speaking, there have been two famous ways in which men have explained the source of all temptation. One of them has been the traditional teaching about Satan, which takes for granted the existence of a personal devil such as is pictured in Milton's *Paradise Lost*. In accordance with this tradition it is usual for us to say, 'I am tempted of the devil,' and in a greater or a less degree to shirk the responsibility for yielding by throwing the blame on the devil, who is very subtle and very mighty.

Whether there be a personal devil or not, or whether St. James believed in the existence of a personal devil or not, are not the questions at issue.

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

What I wish to point out is that in speaking about temptation he says nothing about the devil, and in reference to this subject it is of little concern whether there be a personal devil or not. The one absolute certainty guaranteed by universal experience is that in human nature there is a 'dead body,' a weakness or defect which manifests itself in putting the animal desires in the wrong place.

The other way of explaining temptation is to find its origin in the good purpose of God—the sort of teaching which tells us that enticement is a necessary experience in the development of character, and that God in His providential ordering of human life arranged it in order that goodness or virtue might be possible. It is expressed in a blunt and vivid way in Fitzgerald's translation of Omar Khayyam:

O Thou, who didst with pitfall and with gin
Beset the road I was to wander in,
Thou wilt not with predestined evil round
Enmesh, and then impute my fall to sin.

O Thou, who man of baser earth didst make,
And even with Paradise devise the snake,
For all the sin wherewith the race of man
Is blackened, man's forgiveness *give*, and *take*.

A Practical View of Temptation

It is almost a blasphemous thing to say that God needs man's forgiveness for allowing him to be tempted; but I cannot see how we are to get away from the feeling that this is true if God originated temptation and is responsible for its existence.

St. James, however, points out that God tempts no man; and his words suggest that all these ultimate questions have little to do with the matter so far as a man of common sense is concerned. It is better to leave all such questions as the ultimate origin of temptation alone, and to recognize that the important thing about it is not so much whence it comes as how to overcome it. In order to do so it is necessary to recognize—

1. That the *immediate and practical* source of temptation is to be found in that 'weakness,' or 'lack of life,' or 'disease,' which in the last chapter has been spoken of as 'the dead body of sin,' by reason of which we are prone to use those animal desires, which properly used conduce to the continuance and vigour of our being, as instruments of self-destruction. This being recognized several inevitable considerations follow. It follows,

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

for example, that *every man is his own worst enemy*; and that no enemy of any kind, seen or unseen, can injure a man's self except in so far as the man puts himself in the enemy's power. That is not the same thing as to say that other people cannot do us any harm. A man who has not got enemies, the world being constituted as it is at present, is no man at all. He may have a man's body and wear a man's clothing, but he is not a man with individuality about him. A wise man remembers he has enemies, and foils them if he can. He so guards his reputation and his possessions that his enemies are thwarted. It is, nevertheless, true that whilst other men may injure a man's reputation and his possessions, no power in the world can injure a man's self or character unless he gives way to his own weakness.

2. Another important consideration which inevitably follows acceptance of St. James's statement is that any man can master temptation if he wills to do so. He can 'meet' it and 'master' it and make it 'crouch beneath his feet, and so be pedestalled in triumph.' For circumstances which encompass them with difficulty, for sorrow or for

A Practical View of Temptation

loss, men *may* not be responsible; but for yielding to temptations which come through such circumstances, men are always responsible. No man is ever driven into sin. We sin when we voluntarily yield to enticement, and *not till then*.

3. A third consideration which follows inevitably from the words of St. James is that temptation is to be overcome by *healthy subjectivity*. There are two ways in which such healthy subjectivity finds expression.

First: in *repression*, or the systematic denial of one's own weaknesses in little points every day as each day comes. 'Self-denial of this sort is like the insurance which a man pays on his goods. The tax does him no good at the time, and possibly may never bring him a return; but if the fire does come, his having paid it will save him from ruin.' So with the person inured to habits of self-denial in little things. He will stand like a tower when everything rocks about him and his weaker fellows are winnowed like chaff in the blast.

Second: in *substitution*. To explain the process of substitution Professor William James uses the following illustration in his lectures to teachers;

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

‘For instance, your pupils are wandering in mind, are listening to a sound outside the window, which presently grows interesting enough to claim all their attention. You can call the latter back by bellowing at them not to listen to those sounds, but to keep their minds on their books or on what you are saying. And, by thus keeping them conscious that your eye is sternly on them, you may produce a good effect. But it will be a wasteful effect and an inferior effect; for the moment you relax your supervision the attractive disturbance, always there soliciting their curiosity, will overpower them, and they will be just as they were before: whereas if, without saying anything about the street disturbances, you open a counter-attraction by starting some very interesting talk or demonstration yourself, they will altogether forget the distracting incident, and without any effort follow you along. *There are many interests that can never be inhibited by way of negation.*’ Repression is not enough. Substitution must be superadded. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews says, ‘That you may not be wearied and faint in your minds, but persevere in the race, consider Jesus, the

A Practical View of Temptation

finished pattern of faith.' And if we had only so learned of Him that, when the flesh is against us and temptation comes as a flood, we could turn attention to Him with His splendid and perfect doing in our own nature, it would not be ours to cease aspiring or to give up in despair. But even all this is not enough. We have all struggled at repression. We have also seen the faultless form of the Master, and have struggled onward

As one whose footsteps halt,
Toiling in immeasurable sand,
And o'er a weary sultry land,
Far beneath a blazing vault,
Sown in a wrinkle of a monstrous hill,
The city sparkles like a grain of salt.

What we want is not only the art of repression and the vision of the ideal, but the reinforcement of life. And the message of the gospel is that in the midst of the ages stands the *Fountain of Life*.

THE FIRST WORD

Now after that John was delivered up, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: REPENT YE.—Mark i. 14-15.

THAT is the very first note of the gospel. From the lips of the forerunner it rang clear and sharp and urgent. He was the harbinger of a new spring-time of the spirit. When Jesus, the bringer of that spring-time, came, He came with the identical message. When St. Peter began the Christian propaganda after the Pentecost, this was his first word of exhortation. From that time till now wherever the gospel has been proclaimed, the first cry of its heralds, like the cry of men waking a sleeping city by calling 'Fire,' has been a call to repentance uttered with powerful solemnity. Let us attend to the solemn call, and try to get at its real significance for men who live so far away from the days of the Lord and His first messengers.

It is known to every student of the New Testa-

The First Word

ment that there are two words used therein for repentance, one of them referring to 'change of purpose' and one of them to 'change of mind.' The latter is the word used by St. Matthew and St. Mark and the 'writer of the Acts of the Apostles' in their reports of the preaching of John the Baptist, our Lord, and St. Peter. Translated literally it means 'Be ye of another mind.' Hence, to begin with, we shall never know what repentance means for ourselves or anybody else if we confine our attention to outward acts. We read stories in Church history about men who have lived on the tops of pillars in a desert, who have condemned themselves to daily scourgings and macerations of the flesh, who have worn hair shirts with projecting pieces of iron next the skin, so that each movement of the body inflicted exquisite pain; and all the while fancied that they were doing His will who commanded that men everywhere should repent. It is still a common thing in certain Christian circles to advocate fastings and lonely vigils. But such practices are not repenting. They amount to penance, or punishing your body for the sin of your soul.

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

Repentance has to do with the *mind* rather than the body. It is an appeal to that thought-world which forms the background of all our external acts. It is a call to change our ways of thinking in reference to religion and morals. Because that is so it has to do with thinking and feeling and willing.

1. *Thinking*. It is a call to change our ways of thinking in moral and religious matters, and to share Christ's views about them. The nature of the change is disclosed by a little reflection on the mental states of the people to whom the call was first addressed. Two great ideas or principles dominated the minds of the Jews. One of them was religious and one was moral, the latter depending on the former. The religious idea was that God's relationship to them was purely a legal relationship. He was the head of the nation who, since Old Testament times, had retired from the scene on account of the nation's disobedience, and was living remote from men far above the heavens. The sense of any personal relationship between God and the individual soul had died out. The moral idea was that it was possible to atone for the

The First Word

commission of sins, and hasten the coming of God's kingdom on the earth, by the performance of ceremonies. They thought that God was to be compounded with by means of sacrifices, and that outward association with the people of God would insure immunity from punishment. Amongst the consequences of such ways of thinking were self-complacency and hypocrisy.

Jesus taught that the relationship of God to individual men was not official but personal,—that He was 'Father in heaven'; that God is not a mere person who is righteous; His whole being is on fire with righteousness, the flame of His awful purity being unapproachable by man; that at one and the same time He is 'Love'; that every man is under personal obligation to God to live a righteous life, and that He accepts not ritual performances but a holy life.

To repent, therefore, meant to put away the old ideas about God and share the views of Jesus.

2. *Feeling.* Because feeling depends upon thinking, it is a call to change our ways of feeling from self-complacency to self-blame. When we share Christ's views we come to feel as He felt

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology about sin. This is the very marrow of repentance. It is a deep feeling of shame and sorrow, but different from the feeling of shame and sorrow we call remorse. Remorse is shame and sorrow opaque with despair, repentance is shame and sorrow radiant with hope. The tears of the truly penitent are media through which he sees his better self in Jesus' face transfigured and redeemed.

3. *Willing*. No man can share Christ's views about God and feel as He felt about sin without forsaking his past sin and hopefully determining to do right. Such active forsaking and resolving is lifelong, and it is the surest of all signs that a man is walking in the way of salvation.

The most impressive example of the grace of repentance in Christian history is that of St. Paul, the champion of the gospel among the Gentiles. We have his living experience expressed in his own words, and it will help us to recall it. No one can doubt the radical nature of the change that came in his life. He himself was so aware of it that he spoke of his old life as that of an enemy to God. During the old life he never dreamed of himself as an enemy to God; on the contrary, he was most

The First Word

zealous for God, and he could declare that he had lived in all good conscience all his days, following the light as far as he saw it, and doing righteousness as far as he knew it. And yet he speaks of that life as one in which he had been God's enemy. The reason for this changed way of thinking was that he had come to *share the views of Jesus* about God and sin. He was a Jew brought up with a mind saturated with Jewish conceptions, but he came to believe that Jesus was not merely one of a number of good men, but so much better than the best man that there would never be another like Him. He came to speak of Jesus as the Own Son of God. He came to believe that Jesus died *just because* He was the Own Son of God, and that by so doing He gave to the world an unparalleled revelation of God's love for the world. This revelation showed him larger and other truths than Pharisaism had ever shown him. The influence of those truths brought him a feeling of shame and sorrow for his past so acute and persistent that, writing in his old age to his son Timothy, he is carried away by his feeling, and speaks of himself as 'the chief of sinners.' But over against the undisguised black-

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

ness of the past he saw shining the radiant light of a bright hope, the hope that he and every man might be made perfect in Christ Jesus. 'If, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more shall we be saved by His life.' And out of such a change in thought and feeling there came a change of conduct which is the most wonderful and effective change ever wrought in Christian history.

Such is the philosophy and such is the experience of the grace of repentance. It follows, therefore, that *repentance is the practical duty of every man*. We live at a time when this grace is very much of a stranger. The chief reason for this deplorable fact is a perverse notion that we cannot repent at will, that we cannot make up our minds to be sorry nor to be ashamed. How, then, are we to repent? We are not responsible, it is urged, because we cannot mourn, and to call on us to repent is to ask for something that cannot be done at will. Such statements sometimes find expression in Christian teaching. But they are the effect of loose thinking. A right view of the philosophy and the experience of repentance will make us sure that *any man can*

The First Word

repent at will. The first thing necessary is to turn his thoughts away from himself to the truth as it is in Jesus, and when a man is brought face to face with the truth which is in Him he will most assuredly strike his breast, owning himself a sinner, and his experience will be expressed in the words, 'God Himself wants me to be right, then I can be right, then I WILL be right.'

It is not morbid dwelling on ourselves and the folly of our past that will enable us to break with that past; but if a man will only turn his thoughts to Him who made him for Himself, if he will confess his sin to Him who cannot of His Fatherly compassion forsake or forget the child of His love, the poison shall be wrung from his soul, the force of his will shall be replenished out of the spring of the eternal life which is in Christ Jesus, and he shall

Curb the beast that would drag him in the mire,
And leave the hot swamp of voluptuousness,
He shall set his uphill shoulder to the hill,
And climb the mount of blessing.

THE CARDINAL WORD

Through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins.—Acts xiii. 38.

FORGIVENESS is the unique word in the Christian vocabulary. It is not found in the great systems of religion which stand apart from Christianity. The God of Buddhism knows no forgiveness because he recognizes no sin. His cold, stern lips speak to men of the destruction of sense and intelligence as the only hope of release from that which is evil. The God of Mohammedanism cannot forgive. He is a Sultan in the sky, fierce and inflexible, never tolerating the absence of obedience. The word is not found in any of the modern schools of thought which stand apart from the Christian Faith. They are true to nature, and in nature there is no such thing as forgiveness. For convenience' sake we often speak of men breaking the laws of

The Cardinal Word

nature, but as a matter of fact, men never do break those laws. If any man goes contrary to nature, nature's laws *break him* without haste and without respite. Civilized society knows no such thing. If a man commits a crime, he may purge it in the eyes of the law of the land, but in a real sense he never leaves prison when once he is put there. He cannot go back into the position he held in society before. His sort of society has done with him. It has no use for him.

But without going further into detail, this is enough to lay stress upon the fact that nowhere else save in the gospel of Jesus do we find any message of forgiveness or any hope of it. It is a word which is *the sole property* of the gospel, *and it is the cardinal word of the gospel*. Shall we try and understand it in order that we may receive it?

A short process of elimination will help us. For example: Forgiveness does not mean that God undoes the past, or prevents the natural consequences of past actions. There is a way of thinking of sinful acts as if they were so many bills that have become due; and that when we are forgiven all these are collected by a beneficent hand and dis-

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

charged in full. Jesus pays it all, so to speak, and hands over the receipted bills to us. This is not true. The man who draws a bill on nature has to meet it in full when the time comes. No divine act ever arrests the operation of those natural laws which work out the consequences of any sort of sin.

Neither does it mean that God ignores sin. Mediaeval theology used to distinguish between the judicial and paternal attributes of the Deity. Justice was spoken of as distinct from mercy. The theologians of those days spoke of God as if His real and official characters were separate, and as if in His official capacity He could ignore that which He really knew to exist. The place of that conception in the history of the development of Christian thought is in no manner of question. But the ideals of the twentieth century are different from those of the sixteenth, and modern minds revolt against such a conception of forgiveness. If God is to be in any true sense God to us, in no sense can He be two-faced. His official character must correspond with His real character. He cannot pass over any act and treat it as if He knew

The Cardinal Word

not of it. The centre of the universe must be just.

I am sure we shall never have any real faith in the forgiveness of God unless we first clear our minds of the notions that it has to do with the remission of the consequences of sinful acts, or that it amounts to the ignoring or condoning of sin. All the time we have such ideas we shall be haunted by the suspicion that Christian forgiveness is not real, and any faith we have in it will only be make-believe.

Having put on one side all such notions, we must steadily bear in mind two great Christian principles. The first is that God is a PERSON. A generation ago there was a common tendency to think of God as a Power—either as a physical Power, or a moral Power, making for righteousness. A common tendency of our generation is to think of Him as a Presiding Intelligence penetrating nature through and through. As such He loses all those attributes of infinite majesty which filled the writers of the New Testament with reverence and awe. He is devoid of all those feelings of pleasure and anger and resentment which we always associate with

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

personality. He works according to fixed laws with unfaltering exactitude. A Presiding Intelligence penetrating nature through and through, who is that and nothing more, cannot possibly forgive. This is the main reason why what is known as the Higher Pantheism cuts at the very roots of the gospel. Our God is a PERSON. The power in nature is His right arm, and the intelligence in the universe is the expression of His mind. He can feel satisfaction in our righteousness, and He is provoked to resentment and awful indignation by our wrongdoing. That is the first foundation-stone which lies at the base of the Christian doctrine of forgiveness.

The second principle we need to bear in mind is that the Personality of God and the personalities of men are capable of intercommunication and of working together. That is a mystery we can never quite penetrate, but it is a mystery every man knows to be very real. The Spirit of God witnesseth with our spirits, and we may have fellowship with the Father. That is all we know about it, but that is enough for us to understand the possibility and the reality of pardon, for *forgiveness is a transaction*

The Cardinal Word

which takes place wholly within the realm of the spirit. Hence to understand the nature of it we must take as our starting-point what forgiveness is when it takes place between the spirit of one man and another. For example: When a man has injured me it is natural for me to have a feeling of resentment against that man. The greater and more undeserved the injury he does me the greater will be my resentment and the more hot my indignation against him. I may not go as far in my resentment and indignation as to consciously and deliberately wish him ill, but at the thought of his conduct towards me my heart will swell with emotion, and there will be discord whenever we meet. I shall not be in harmony with him, I shall have no peace with him, and it is probable that I should punish him for his conduct if it were in my power to do so. But if there be evidence that he had no intention to injure me, and that he is truly sorry for what he has done, or even if he did intend it and is sincerely penitent, the emotion of resentment and indignation dies down and gradually disappears, and when I meet that man, instead of being out of harmony I am at peace with him. The effects of the injury he

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

has done me may remain, and it may be that he will suffer long in his mind for having done it, but the discord between us has gone, and my heart is no longer inflamed with anger; and the very memory of the injury which before served to divide us, instead of separating us binds us more closely together.

Something like that is the story of forgiveness as it is between the spirit of one man and the spirit of another, and we have only to remember that God is a Person capable of feeling the emotion we indicate by the words resentment and indignation, and to lift the illustration to a higher plane than the merely human, to have a clear notion of what is meant when we are told that 'Through this man is preached *the forgiveness of sins.*' It is a transaction between two spirits, the Living God and the living soul, and has nothing to do directly with material bodies or laws of nature at all. It is the restoration of concord between two persons who were at discord. It 'reconciles' God to us and us to God, and how great a thing that is only the man can know into whose consciousness the experience has come.

The Cardinal Word

This conception of forgiveness makes plain several difficult matters related to the subject which are apt to perplex our minds. There is, for example, that great statement of the Master's, 'If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive you.' If forgiveness means the putting away of resentment and concord between two spirits where there was discord before, the Saviour's statement is not merely a statement of the Father's unwillingness to forgive those who do not practise forgiveness towards their fellows. It is a statement of what must be true in the very nature of things. Willingness to forgive is not an arbitrary condition of forgiveness, it is an absolute necessity without which God's forgiveness cannot be. God cannot contradict Himself, and the gospel tells us His universe is so built that the man who cherishes hatred or vengeance in his heart is by that very fact out of harmony with Him, and therefore is not forgiven.

All this, however, is *not* the whole truth about Christian forgiveness. It may be further described as an open door through which a man may go out of his own past and gradually leave the con-

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

sequences of his sin behind him. Forgiveness does not cut off the consequences of sin, but like a pointsman on a railway it shifts the train of consequences from a down grade to an up grade. Suppose a man has done the things he ought not. Suppose he has wasted his life and ruined his constitution in the ways of sin, and entangled himself with evil associations; that man cannot make a new start in life. To say that he can is to use a common form of speech which hides much loose thinking. No man can ever start afresh. The past is there with all its folly and failure, and it cannot be undone.

The moving finger writes, and having writ,
Moves on.

And a man has to move on with that past behind. But he may move on in the direction of all goodness and the Father's Home, or he may move on in the direction of worse sin and the outer darkness; and when God forgives His forgiveness opens the way for a man to that road which leads to all nobility and purity; and the very consequences of sin which forgiveness cannot alter are of use in

The Cardinal Word

keeping him upon that road, because they keep him lowly and drive him constantly to the throne of grace, where he finds help in time of need. The evil consequences of sin are changed from a fatal to a vital issue.

THE BENEDICTION

My peace I give unto you.—John xiv. 27.

THIS was the Master's dying bequest to His disciples; and it has been the inheritance and birth-right of His disciples ever since. As far back as history takes us we find that it was a common custom amongst Eastern peoples to greet each other with an invocation of peace both at meeting and at parting. In the Old Testament we often read of the custom. When Moses left Jethro and started on his way to revisit Egypt the two parted with an invocation of peace. With such an invocation Jonathan parted from David after he had concluded his compact with him. The practice was common all through the ages right down to the days of Jesus, and it is so still in the East. Jesus was about to close His intercourse with the apostles, and it was inevitable that the common word of leave-

The Benediction

taking should fall from His lips. But 'In Him all things became new, and on His lips the conventional threadbare salutation changes into the tender and mysterious communication of a real gift.'¹ His peace was something He had before the world was. It was something He kept right down to the gates of death and after. To bestow it on men was the purpose of His life's work. It was not merely a secret He had come to reveal, or a philosophy He had come to teach to men, but a treasure He had come to give them. It will help us to understand His mission to consider the nature of His peace and the way it comes to us.

I. *The Nature of Christ's peace.* It almost goes without saying that it was *independent of outside conditions*, and also that it was compatible with the most strenuous activity. The story of His career is a story of stress and storm. He was forced into exile as soon as He was born. His townsmen sought to kill Him more than once. His own brethren counted Him for a madman. The cities in which He did most of His mighty works rejected Him. The multitudes for whom He spent His

¹ Dr. Maclaren.

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

strength and His life forsook Him. The influential people in the land set themselves against Him. The rich people sought His destruction. He was slandered by rich and poor. A huge conspiracy was formed to secure His death. One of His disciples betrayed Him. The priests brought false witnesses against Him. The people amongst whom He had gone about doing good clamoured for His death. The law of the land denied Him justice and sent Him to an ignominious end. No man ever lived who had fewer possessions. For the greater part of His life He worked as a carpenter. His only home during His ministry of teaching and healing was the houses of strangers. Pious women gave of their substance to support the little fellowship of followers He had formed. He had to work a miracle to pay the Temple tax. He had no clothing save the garb of a Galilean peasant. Again and again we read how He toiled so strenuously that He 'had no time so much as to eat bread'; and continued to toil to the very verge of physical exhaustion. Yet with all this poverty and toil and persecution behind Him, and with the Cross and all its horrors before Him, He gives His

The Benediction

disciples His peace. Clearly then, we must go deeper than outward conditions to find it.

The secret of *it is no more to be found in inward temperament than in outward conditions*. Certain qualities, like cheerfulness and contentment, are largely matters of temperament. Speaking of the romance of mountain climbing, Sir Martin Conway once said: 'Some think the romance is to climb and to go on climbing them, yet when they are on the summit the mystery is not there, and when you get back to the base it is not there either. When we behold them from the plain like the white walls of heaven shining on the far horizon against the sky, they call us to come within their sacred enclosure and learn wondrous things, but when we enter their gates the mystery has flown aloft. When we are on the top it has sunk into the valleys or lies upon the vast extending plain from which we came. Romance is always somewhere else, never in the life we lead, but in what we imagine or read about. There is romance on the sea for the landsman, romance in the mine for the townsman, romance in the town for the countryman, romance in high life for the plodder,

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

and in low life for the rich. All romance *is in the heart of man*. It is not really outside at all, but it is within us if it exists at all.' Those who go to find the golden treasure of romance in the mountains seem to find it, if they find it at all, within the temperaments they carry with them. *But we must go deeper than any temperament to find the essence of the peace of Jesus*. If that were not so it could not have been a gift to each one of His disciples alike, so different from each other in temperament.

Behind externals, then, and also behind temperament, we must go. We shall think ourselves close to the peace of Jesus by some such process as this: The people who lived in His day believed that God made the world, but for them God was not present in the world. He was far away, dwelling somewhere beyond the clouds. His presence was scarcely felt. He was only to be sought at regular hours. They expected Him to come to earth at some time in the future. Jesus knew that God lives everywhere in the universe. The trees, the clouds, the birds, the flowers spoke to Him of the divine presence, but all these signs of the presence

The Benediction

of God were insignificant compared with the signs He found within Himself. He felt Himself to be conscious of God. He knew that He was related to the Father, and He surrendered Himself to the Father so completely that He could say, 'I and the Father are one.' Communion with God resulted in Sonship realized. This was the very heart of His peace. Intimate and personal relation between His Spirit and the Spirit of the Father brought about by self-surrender was the secret of Jesus. Because of this relation the Spirit of the Father filled every channel of His being, shining from His eyes, radiating from His face, flowing from His lips, and giving Him marvellous power over the bodies and souls of men. 'The Father who dwelleth in Me He doeth the works.'

This, then, was the nature of Christ's peace: *It was harmony between His own Spirit and the Divine Spirit. It was fellowship between Himself and the Father.*

II. The way Christ gives peace to us.

1. *He makes peace through the blood of His Cross.* We are reconciled to God by Christ's death. We believe that in Him we have a unique demon-

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

stration of all that is gentlest, truest, and noblest in human life, a concentrated revelation of what God is. We know that His death was due to wickedness of every kind. It was brought about by the jealousy of offended priests, by the treachery of Judas, by the bloodthirstiness of a Jewish mob, by the cowardice of a dissolute Roman official. We learn that in the very moment when sinful men were slaying God's Son He said, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' Thus we reach the truth, *not* that God slew Christ to be an offering unto Himself, but that sinful men slew Christ, and Christ forgave the men who slew Him. It is a sheer impossibility for forgiving love to do more than that. When the truth comes home to us that He was indeed God's own Son, that what He was to men around Him God is through Him and in Him to us all, instead of being afraid of God or hating the thought of God, and thinking of God as a cruel tyrant, we feel drawn to Him, and we know that He is willing to forgive us our sins. When we accept His forgiveness we become reconciled to His way. We are able to say, and to mean what we say: 'God's

The Benediction

will is just, God's way is right, God's word shall be our law.' We cease to look upon life as a sphere in which self is to be asserted, and look on it as a sphere in which we can serve God by following Jesus. We are at peace with God.

2. But there is a still deeper way in which Christ gives His peace. *It is not merely by contemplation but also by identification that Christ's peace comes.* 'He that cleaveth to the Lord is one spirit' with Christ. Cleaving to Him by faith we become in an unmistakable but indescribable sense intimately related to the Spirit who loves us and enfolds us. 'The deepest quietive, the deepest peace and serenity, and at the same time the deepest joy, is to be found only in fellowship with Christ.'¹

¹ Martensen.

THE IMPERATIVE CONDITION

Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.—Acts xvi. 31.

THE circumstances in which this statement was made are familiar to all readers of the New Testament. It is not with the circumstances, however, but simply with the statement that I wish to deal. It is a statement which puts in the simplest form of speech the great truth that all the enlightenment which comes to us through Him who is the Light of the World, all the blessings contained in the treasure-house of His gospel, all the inspirations which are inseparable from His life, and all the rewards that He has promised to give to us, are ours on *the condition of faith*. The one great demand that Jesus Himself made upon men was a demand for faith in Himself, and throughout Christian history all the benefits of the gospel have been proclaimed as contingent on faith in Him. It is therefore most

The Imperative Condition

necessary that we should try to understand the nature of this demand. What is faith, and why should it be a condition of salvation?

My attempt to answer these questions will take the form of a series of propositions which I shall not so much try to prove as to explain, and then see to what conclusion they lead us.

1. *Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is more transcendent than the typical beliefs of science.* Certain theologians have exercised a vast amount of thought and ingenuity in order to show that the belief which brings salvation is the same in essence with the belief of the scientist who sets about making a discovery in the realms of matter. Surely nothing but confusion comes of such an attempt. The attitude of the scientist towards some mystery and the attitude of a true believer towards Jesus Christ are poles apart. They may not be opposed, but they are so different that they cannot be compared. The belief of a scientist in the order of nature is primarily intellectual, whereas the belief of a man in the Lord Jesus Christ is primarily moral. Again: The belief of a scientist always rests on data that are ready to hand, the facts which justify it are

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

outside of him, and to be seen by anybody ; but the belief of a man in the Lord Jesus Christ rests on truths which do not admit of ordinary demonstration, and the experiences which justify it are within his own soul. There is, therefore, no true analogy between the two soul-attitudes.

2. *Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is far deeper than belief in creeds.* Creeds are certain views of the Church about Christ's pre-existence, incarnation, atonement, &c., expressed in a set of formal propositions. To believe these is to take for granted that they are true. The present general outcry against all creeds as such is irrational. There is such a thing as Church consciousness, as well as individual consciousness ; and in so far as the creeds are the expression of the consciousness of the whole Church of Jesus Christ they simply must be taken for granted at certain stages of soul growth. It is still, however, true that vital saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is independent of all creeds past, present, or future.

3. *Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is something different from the exercise of 'a special sensè.'* It has been argued that Faith is 'a faculty of our con-

The Imperative Condition

stitution as much as Conscience or Reason, with its own sphere of operations and peculiar function.' Such an argument is based upon an old and discredited psychology which dealt with man's conscious life as though it were divided into compartments and faculties. But it is now generally recognized as one of the foundation principles of psychology that the soul or self is an essential unity, and that such terms as reason, conscience, memory, &c., represent certain activities of the self or soul in its entirety. 'Memory,' for example, indicates the soul recalling the past; 'Reason,' the attitude of the soul in forming judgements; 'Conscience,' the activity of the soul in determining between right and wrong. So: 'Faith' stands *not* for a distinct and separate faculty, but for an attitude or activity of the undivided self or soul.

4. *Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ rests upon two great essential truths.* The *first* is that in the historic personality of Jesus of Nazareth we have a full revelation of God's character and love. Jesus Christ was God become man in self-sacrifice and dying for man's sin. The *second* is that every man has a capacity for knowing God when He so

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology reveals Himself. The truth in Jesus is self-demonstrative when we really see it. It is truth attested by 'demonstration of the Spirit.' We have no real proof that the sun is shining except that we see it and feel it. We have no proof that love is of supreme worth, except that we know it to be so because of the testimony of our own hearts. Not otherwise is the truth which is in Jesus to be known by and certified to us. There is profound insight in Browning's words, 'I know Christ by the direct glance of the soul's seeing, as the eye sees the light.'

5. *Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the committal, the surrender of self to the revelation of God we see to be in Christ.* It is the total response of the soul to Him as the way to the Father. It is the voluntary committal and surrender of my personality to the personality I see in Him. There are several ways of illustrating this. Professor William James gives us a very vivid illustration of saving faith in its aspect of *self-committal* in his pamphlet, *The Will to Believe*. He pictures a man in the Alps who has had the ill-luck to work himself into a position from which the only escape is by a

The Imperative Condition

terrible leap. He has had no similar experience, and therefore has no evidence of his ability to perform the leap successfully; but hope and confidence in himself make him sure that he will not miss his aim. They nerve his feet to risk the leap and launch himself across the abyss. That situation illustrates *the venture of faith*. A man has such confidence in the revelation which has come to him through the Lord Jesus Christ that he commits himself for good and all and ever to Him as the full revealer of God.

The best illustration of the *self-surrender* meant by faith to be found on the plane of human life is to be discerned in that most sacred of all human bonds called marriage, 'signifying unto us,' as it does, 'the mystical union that is between Christ and His Church.' Every such relation, when it is true, is built on the self-surrender of the husband to the wife and the wife to the husband. It is the glory of such love that without in any way impairing the individuality it involves the self-surrender of each to the other.

6. *There are several ways in which such self-committal and self-surrender proves itself.* One is

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology
in *self-distrust*. If a man is satisfied with his own conduct, and thinks he is as good as he need be, he may believe in all the creeds and all the articles, but there is no faith in him. Another way is in *strenuous effort* to reach a character higher than any to which he has attained.

Other ways in which faith proves itself will be dealt with in the next chapter. Let me close this by saying that unless we do make such self-surrender the Lord Jesus Christ can do nothing for us. If we hold back one fraction of ourself or hold ourselves back from Him for one moment, in so far as we do so He cannot save us. Some of self and some of Him is an attitude of compromise and weakness. *The whole* surrendered and committed to Him is the keynote of faith and the indispensable condition of salvation.

PHASES OF FAITH

And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God.—Mark xi. 22.

WE have seen that saving faith consists in self-surrender to our Lord Jesus Christ as the full revealer of the character and love of God, and that such faith manifests itself in many aspects. Probably there is no word in our speech with so many shades of meaning as the word faith. Not that it has more than one meaning, but it is like a diamond with a thousand facets, and the colour of the light it reflects depends upon the angle from which we regard it. More than one ray of light shines from it as it stands in this saying of the Saviour's quoted as our text. It was uttered to the apostles just after the blighting of the barren fig-tree. Many an explanation of that mysterious action of the Master's has been given. Here is one: Two days before, Jesus and His disciples had entered Jerusalem with the plaudits of the multitude ringing in their ears. The disciples

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

thought that surely now He, whom they had long looked on as a monarch in disguise, would be carried with acclamation to His throne. But during those two days the attitude of the people had become increasingly hostile. A huge conspiracy, which sought His life, was closing round Him. Jesus Himself foresaw that in a few hours a conflict would begin, and that instead of sitting upon a throne He would be hanging upon a cross. As a consequence His disciples would lose their faith in Him and lose confidence in God; so He gave them a striking lesson in the form of an acted parable, which they were sure to recall when the dark time came. He cursed and blighted a barren fig-tree. In other words, He did something the reason for which they could not see, something which seemed hard and inconsistent, and when they asked Him why He did it, He said, 'To teach you to have faith in God.'

Surely, then, we do but unfold the significance of His word when we say that He meant: '*Put the best construction on all God's doings, and trust Him when His ways are hidden.*'

That is a word we need to hear and heed. Our

Phases of Faith

problems and difficulties are not the same in form as those the apostles had to face, but they are the same in substance. The world changes, and with it the thoughts of men, but the problems of life abide. The riddle shifts its incidence, but the riddle itself is perennial.

Let us take the two rays of light which shine from the Saviour's word one by one.

The first is a call to put the highest and best construction on those acts of God which are mysterious and seem hard. We live in a world where it is possible to put different interpretations on the same facts. We have only to look down the column in a newspaper which records the opinions of public men on a set of facts to see how usual it is for men to take different and often diametrically opposite views of the same facts. We know that it is our own constant practice to put a gloomy or a bright construction on the same facts, according to the mood we happen to be in. The same circumstances which, at night time, when we are weary yet sleepless, are construed as omens of disaster, are interpreted as harbingers of joy in the light of the morning, when we are rested.

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

Now there are many details in God's providential dealings and moral government of the world of which it is possible to take either a dark or a bright view. Here are two as samples :

1. *The pain in nature.* The deepest and most influential literature of our day casts a fierce and blinding light upon the fact of suffering. The message of the man of science is that millions of ages ago millions of creatures became sentient. Since then there have been millions of generations, and in each generation myriads of separate individuals; and throughout all this incalculable time, this inconceivably vast host of sentient organisms has been in a state of unceasing pain.

Who can believe that God is good,
And love creation's final law,
When Nature, red in tooth and claw
With ravine, shrieks against his creed?

2. *Certain facts of human life.* 'Such cruel, such pitiable spectacles, such heartrending, revolting, detestable, maddening scenes. The defeat of the good, the success of the evil, physical pain, mental anguish, the prevalence and intensity of sin, the prevailing idolatries, the corruptions, the

Phases of Faith

dreary, hopeless religion—all this is a vision to dizzy and appal, and inflicts on the mind the sense of profound mystery, which is absolutely without human solution.' It is two thousand years since Jesus said, 'All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth.' And

What of logic or of truth appears,
In tacking Anno Domini to the years?
Near twenty hundred liveried thus have lied,
But tarries yet the cause for which He died.

These are dark facts, and there is no getting away from them. By an impulse as irresistible as hunger or thirst, the question arises, 'How can all these things be compatible with the existence of an All-wise, All-mighty, and All-good God?'

Partial answers without number can be found, but not one that covers all the ground. Every man who is not self-deceived is compelled to say in reference to such realities, 'I cannot understand.' But any man may say 'I cannot understand' in either of two ways and with either of two implications. He may say it in a way which means 'I cannot understand and therefore I will doubt,' or he may say it in a way which means 'I cannot understand

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

and therefore I will trust.' He may assume a petulant, querulous attitude towards those things he cannot understand, or he may assume an attitude which is hopeful and trustful. He may put a low construction upon them, or he may put a high one, and the admonition of the Saviour is to put a high construction upon what we cannot understand.

For the sake of illustration leave these heights and consider what such conduct means in the practical affairs of human society. A man has a friend concerning whom he hears strange and startling things, which, on the face of them, look to be against him. Two courses are open to that man. He may either put a harsh construction on the evidence before him, making no allowances based on love and trust, and come to the conclusion that he is dealing with a bad man; or he may refuse to believe evil against his friend. He may say, 'I recognize that the case looks black, but I have reason to know that my friend is a man of high principle and of great goodness of heart, and I will continue to trust him in spite of all the things I see and hear.'

Which of these two attitudes is the nobler? Surely

Phases of Faith

the latter. So, to compare small things with great, a man may look on the hard things which appear in the world of God's government, and make up his mind that God is not good, or he may take a wider flight than such appearances warrant, and continue loyally to trust Him in spite of all. The basis for all such trust is the teaching of Jesus, and the strongest of all arguments in favour of it is to be found in the history of the human race, which teaches us by innumerable examples that of all the curses which can poison life and paralyse the highest activities there is none so dire and fatal as that of a lost trust in the Creator and Preserver of mankind; and that, on the other hand, trust in God has filled men with hope, given them the note of triumph instead of the wail of despair, and equipped them for noble living as nothing else has ever done.

Let us come nearer home to our own inner life and experience, and consider faith as *that temper of the soul which trusts God when His ways with our lives are hidden*. The Saviour's word is a call to assume a definite attitude towards God in the midst of those painful experiences, such

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

as sorrow, bereavement, misfortune, &c. We shall most easily arrive at an understanding of the attitude indicated if, leaving the heights of abstract thinking, we descend to the order of practical life and consider it in operation there. Imagine, for example, a young mother hanging over the cot of her sick child, crying with a cry like a muffled heart-break, 'Oh, but I will trust God, I *will trust Him.*' What does she mean? She means, and no man may blame her for meaning, that she will *trust God to restore her child to life and health.* Or imagine a man threatened with some great calamity either to his fortune or to his health. He says 'I will trust God.' He says it and he means it. But what he really means, and no man dare blame him for so meaning, 'I will trust God *to avert the danger.*' Sometimes the child is saved or the calamity is averted, and such people consider their trust has been justified by the event. But often it happens the other way. In spite of what the mother calls her trust in God, her child dies; and notwithstanding what the man calls his trust in God, the calamity comes. Then follow wrong conclusions, bitterness of heart, rebelliousness of spirit, and sometimes it

Phases of Faith

happens that men think of God reproachfully, as if He were guilty of a breach of trust, as if He had failed to do something He was trusted to do. Such men assume a wrong attitude towards Him. To trust God to heal diseases, or avert misfortunes, to do this or that, and to spare us this or that, is *not* to have faith in God, but to be superstitious and selfish. The attitude of true faith in Him is the attitude of the man who says, 'I am so sure that God is my Father, and that He can never do His children any harm, that, though He take away my health and take away my friends, though sorrow be my lot and pain be my heritage, *yet I will trust Him*. Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him.' Faith in God is an assured confidence that whether we are spared misfortunes or troubles or griefs, or have to bear them, God is our Friend and Father, and will help us through whatever falls to our lot. It is reliance upon God like His who was for us not only Teacher but Leader and Exemplar, and who said in the hour of deep and piercing grief, not 'keep Me from entering into the hour of sorrow,' but 'bring Me safely through it.' 'Father, save Me through this

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

hour. Nay! I know Thou wilt do so.' That is what it means to have faith in God in the midst of the painful experiences of life; and the best argument for such trust is to be found in the histories of thousands of men and women whose lives bear witness what a grand thing life may become when it is inspired by such a faith, men and women who have passed through sorrow and misfortune and grief such as few of us are little likely ever to have to bear, and have passed through it with calm faces, and clear eyes, and gentle voices, and hands helpful towards all about them who have been in need.

Such faith in God is like an all-protecting shield from the shafts of doubt and care. It is a shelter from far-travelling apprehension, and from obtrusive fears. It is an open door of deliverance from the world, with its ceaseless din and low ideals; from the flesh, with its blinding passions and low motives; and from the devil, with his softly whispered insinuation that trouble is the goal of life.

THE GREAT GUARDIAN

Shall He not much more clothe you?—Matt. vi. 30.

THESE words, like many more of the Master's, call attention to the painstaking way in which God, who is the source of all life and light and might, cherishes and directs the life of each individual man upon the earth. They point the way to Christ's doctrine of Providence, according to which the infinite God furnishes each man with endowments fitted for a definite task in life; places each man in circumstances where he may, if he will, use his endowments for lofty ends; and is so anxious about each man's welfare that He goes so far as to number his hairs. This doctrine is part of 'the faith once delivered to the saints,' and it is an important element in the gospel of our Lord.

Nothing in life is more certain than that if we are to find real help in our faith it must give us intellectual satisfaction as well as moral support, and I will try to put in a clear and prac-

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

tical shape the way in which Christ's teaching may do both for us.

Some sort of providential order is almost universally accepted as an article of belief by the men of our generation. It is not difficult to believe in the divine government of the material universe. The difficulty is all the other way when we hear and read so much about 'The Presiding Intelligence' and 'The Supreme Being,' terms which are often carelessly used as if they were equivalent to the New Testament name for God. It is not difficult to believe in the activity of providence in the corporate life of nations. The difficulty is to deny it when the whole of the science of modern history proceeds on the principle that universal history is not a chronicle of chaos, but an orderly progression if not an inevitable sequence. Nor is it specially difficult to believe in the activity of providence in the careers of those who belong to the intellectual and moral aristocracy of the human race, compelling attention by the greatness of their thoughts and deeds. The difficulty becomes serious when we are asked to believe it not only of exceptional men who appear here and there, but of every

The Great Guardian

common man amongst the masses of men everywhere.

Here are some of the reasons why it is so difficult. The men who use the telescope and the microscope have so enlarged our imaginations of the vastness of the universe in which we live. The stars have become

Innumerable, pitiless, passionless eyes,
Cold fires, yet with power to burn and brand
His nothingness into man.

Our world has been reduced from pre-eminence to insignificance. The doctors and the biologists tell us we ourselves are made of the same material and come into being by the same processes as flies and worms. The philosophers and the socialists, whose hearts may be more kindly than their tongues or their pens, speak and write very contemptuously of the average man. Then there are the acknowledged facts of experience. One of the most common sights is to see the right man apparently in the wrong place. 'Of every two men we meet one thinks he is not in his right place, and of every two women one is sure that she is not.'

In the face of such facts as these, how can a man

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

have any *reasonable* confidence in Christ's teaching about the Father's care? His teaching is our only authority on the subject; but whilst to some people it is possible to accept a statement as true just because it is reported to have fallen from the lips of Jesus, to most men it is not possible to do so unless the light within responds to it.

Kant, the hero of all modern thought, a man who in sheer intellectual force excelled most and was second to none amongst the great thinkers of his time, used to teach that there are two sorts of reason, which he called theoretical reason and practical reason. He said, for example, that the existence of God is wholly inaccessible to the theoretic reason, but an absolute necessity for the practical reason; that in the region of theory the doctrine of providence could not be demonstrated, but in the region of practice it was one of the most helpful of postulates. During recent years there has come to the front a new philosophy called 'Pragmatism,' which has Kant's teaching on this matter for its working principle. It is a philosophy of profound interest, and represented by most brilliant men. One of the axioms they invite us to accept is that

The Great Guardian

the test of any doctrine is its efficiency, its practical success in helping us to settle some difficulty or to do some work. That is true, they say, which makes a real difference to our lives. Judged by that test this element in the gospel is one of the most reliable of all truths, because it is such a plenteous fountain of practical efficiency. For example :

It invests the poorest talents with inestimable value. It reacts upon our faculties and opportunities like love does upon a trinket. You have a trinket of little intrinsic worth. It would sell for a very small sum in the world's market, but to you it is priceless because *he* gave it you or *she* gave it you, and it is precious inasmuch as it represents the giver and is a token of trust and love. So, let a man believe that his one talent is a gift to himself bestowed by the Almighty One and given as a token of trust and love, and his one talent becomes immeasurably precious. Ruskin's words will come true in his case: 'God appoints to every one of His creatures a separate mission; and if they discharge it honourably, if they quit themselves like men, and follow the light that is in them, there will assuredly come of it such burning as, in

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

its appointed mode and measure, shall shine before men, and be of service constant and holy. . . . Degrees of lustre there must always be, but the weakest among us has a gift, however seemingly trivial, which is peculiar to him, and worthily used, will be a gift to his race for ever.'

It makes the lowliest occupation magnificent. There is a fine passage in George Eliot's drama, *Stradivarius*, which deserves to be often quoted. Stradivarius was a maker of violins some two centuries and a half ago. He had a friend called Naldo, who thought that God was in the monks' cell and the devil everywhere else. One day he said to Stradivarius :

'Tis a petty kind of fame
At best, that comes of making violins.
It saves no masses either ; thou wilt go
To purgatory none the less for making violins.

Stradivarius replies :

'Twere purgatory here to make them ill,
And for my fame when any master holds
'Twixt chin and hand a violin of mine,
He shall be glad that Stradivarius lived,
Made violins, and made them of the best.

The Great Guardian

The masters only know whose work is good,
They shall choose mine, and while God gives them
Skill to play, I'll give them violins to play upon.
God choosing me to help Him.

Naldo :

What, were God at fault for violins, thou absent?

Stradivarius :

Yes ! God were at fault for violins.
If my hand slacked, I should rob God, since
He alone is fullest good,
Leaving a blank instead of violins.
He could not make Antonio Stradivari's violins
Without Antonio.

It was because Stradivarius believed that God had furnished him for his work, had sent him into the world to do that work, and that he was responsible to Him for the use of his talents, that he made violins worth more than their weight in gold to-day. A similar faith would have a similar effect on us and on any work we may have to do in the world.

Thus *when tested pragmatically* a belief in the gospel doctrine of providence is justified.

The doctrine is also to be *tested teleologically*. That is a clumsy word, but it is used for the sake

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

of symmetry with 'Pragmatically,' a word which has recently become popular. It signifies that all processes are to be estimated by the ends they are intended to attain. Like all other processes, the activities of providence can never appear satisfactory viewed apart from the end those activities are intended to reach. This end is 'that we may be partakers of God's holiness.' 'The will of God is our sanctification,' which means, in modern phraseology, 'that we may have noble moral character,' and it looks as if the world were created and life arranged only for the production of character. 'Not the world of conscience only, but also the world of circumstance without. For all other purposes—the making of a fortune, the enjoyment of pleasure, the securing of worldly wealth or position or fame—this is a life ill-adapted. The flux of things, the uncertainties of fate, the varied, unforeseen combinations of circumstances adverse to or destructive of health or wealth or happiness—all these make life a place obviously not formed primarily for these ends, the attempts to gain which are so easily and often thwarted, and which, even when gained, are held on so uncertain a tenure. This is really not the

The Great Guardian

world for worldliness. But observe that all these conditions—this flux, this risk, this uncertainty—are *the very conditions that help to form character*. They make just the discipline by which a man may become tender and spiritual, patient and humble, unselfish and loving. The circumstances of life may defeat other ends, but they cannot defeat, and they even must contribute towards this end.¹ Circumstances which appeal least to our fancy or curiosity or vanity or cupidity always furnish the best opportunity for faith, patience, obedience, and all those dispositions and tendencies which in union make noble character.

Because it has such far-reaching and beneficent effects on our mind and character, if for no other reason, we may reasonably hold fast our faith that we are men and women sent into the world by its Almighty Maker and Ruler for real and serious and definite business; and that life and the universe are so ordered that He simply must care for each one of us 'as if besides nor man nor angel lived in heaven or earth.'

¹ Carnegie Simpson.

BRUISED REEDS AND SMOKING WICKS

A bruised reed shall He not break, and smoking flax shall He not quench.—Matt. xii. 20.

‘ A MOST beautiful picture of Christ’s character. He will be loving and tender and gentle toward all the weak ones among men. Has any one been roughly stricken down and trampled on? Is he lying like a bruised reed in a marsh? Jesus will not despise him or overlook him. Jesus will not plant His footstep on the rude footprint of him who has gone before. No. He will certainly step aside and stoop; and putting forth His gentle hand, He will tenderly raise up again the poor, feeble, sorely crushed thing. . . . Has any one’s candle been blown out? Has the lamp that enlivened the heart and the home been all but extinguished? Has the flame ceased to burn? Has some heartless one from around, or from beneath, come in and ruthlessly snuffed it out? Is there a spark re-

Bruised Reeds and Smoking Wicks

maining? Jesus will be careful of that spark. He will stay His rough wind in the day of His east wind, and not blow severely. He will gently breathe upon the expiring hope that it may be revived.¹

All this was true of Jesus, because whilst He took a dark view of what men were, He took a bright view of what they might become. No one ever saw with such clear vision the undisguised blackness of human nature, but over against the blackness He saw shining the radiant light of a great hope. The spirit of His attitude towards the worst and foulest among men and women is finely expressed in that poem of Walt Whitman's, *To You*.

Whoever you are, now I place my hand upon you that
you be my poem :

I whisper with my lips close to your ear,

I have loved many men and women and men, but I
love none better than you.

.

I will leave all and come and make the hymns of you ;
None have understood you, but I understand you ;
None have done justice to you, you have not done
justice to yourself.

¹ James Morrison, D.D.

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

None but have found you imperfect—I only find no
imperfection in you.

O, I could sing such glories and grandeurs about you—
you have slumbered upon yourself all your life;
What you have done returns already in mockeries.

.

But the mockeries are not *you*;

Underneath them and within them I see *you* lurk;

I pursue *you* where none else has pursued you.

Silence, the desk, the flippant expression, the night,
the accustomed routine—if these conceal you from
others, or from yourself, they do not conceal you
from me;

The shaved face, the unsteady eye, the impure com-
plexion—if these baulk others, they do not baulk
me;

The pert apparel, the deformed attitude, drunkenness,
greed, premature death—all these I part aside.

. . . . Whosoever you are, claim your own at any
hazard.

These shows of east and west are tame, compared
with *you*;

These immense meadows—these interminable rivers—
you are immense and interminable as they.

.

Old or young, male or female, rude, low, rejected by
the rest, whatever YOU are promulges itself;

Through birth, life, death, burial.

Surely the poet got his vision of the value of the
individual soul from Him who was the first to teach

Bruised Reeds and Smoking Wicks

that whatever may happen to any man or whatever he may appear to be, inwardly he is great. The very heart of His message was that every human soul is capable of communion with God, and that for this reason nothing in all the world is to be compared with it in value. It is because He would not break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax; because His gospel raises so high the scale of human value and assures man of so exalted a destiny, that the message of Jesus is so eternally vital.

How difficult it is for us to learn this lesson of the Master's, and yet how necessary, Professor William James has recently shown in his little but most valuable book on *Human Immortality*. He describes how we fail to retain a sense of the dignity and sanctity and capacity of the individual human soul, because we are in the habit of regarding human life in the mass. He shows that numbers demoralize us; and how difficult it is for us to think of a mass of men as being even alive—as living and breathing entities. But when once we get at the inner life of consciousness, every man is an individual with a personality that in itself is

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

greater than an impersonal universe. We can, however, only recognize the worth of the individual when with the help of imagination we get inside the mass and break it up, and enter the life of each unit. It is by such entering into the life of each unit in its individual character that we shall be saved from contempt. Jesus was the first to teach the world to do this. The object for which He lived and suffered and died was to reveal the divine character of the individual personal life, however ignorant and ungifted and heavy and cheap and soiled with sin. He revealed the soul's capacity and demonstrated the right of every unit to share the life of God and to have personal access to Him.

How deeply the first apostles drank of His Spirit in this regard, we have only to read in order to see. Think of St. Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, with his glorious ideal, 'To make *every man* perfect in Christ Jesus,' and his splendid challenge to *every man* to 'put on the Lord Jesus Christ,' iterated and reiterated so constantly in one form and another. For him the 'Lord Jesus Christ' focused into a spotless splendour all the highest moral excellences possible to human nature. Righteous-

Bruised Reeds and Smoking Wicks

ness and compassion, truth and tenderness, justice and mercy, majesty and grace, were all held together in indissoluble union in that one sacred name. It was a name which gathered up into itself all the moral and spiritual virtues and blended them into a completeness which held him fascinated with awe and love. It eclipsed and surpassed all other embodiments of goodness ever presented to his mind, and for St. Paul to 'put on the Lord Jesus Christ' meant for the individual soul to weave out of the moral material at its disposal a character like His. Assuredly a mighty measure of the capacity of the individual soul and an exalted ideal of its destiny.

This individual personal self in every man, with its vast capacity and great destiny, God gave, and cares for so much that His Only-begotten Son came to make its nature and value manifest.

There is nothing our age more needs than a deep and genuine realization of the great gospel truth that every person is distinct and separate and holy, God's own, however bruised and black. The theory of the mart and the street that success goes to the strong and the weak *must* go to the wall

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

tends to discredit it. The growth of 'democracy,' which means the action of men as organized masses, and often the degradation of the individual to a mere human voting machine, tends to obscure it. We hear so much about the rights of the efficient and so little about the rights of the weak. The contempt for 'average humanity,' which began with the teaching of such men as Carlyle, has spread everywhere. Man is all, but *men* are 'poor things.' We are so anxious about the comforts of the body that we are forgetting the value of the soul.

It concerns us to realize this element in the gospel, but it concerns us *even more* to know the way in which the bruised reed may be made strong and the smoking flax quickened into bright flame. How may we 'put on the Lord Jesus Christ' and attain our destiny? The answer is wrapped up in these lines of Madame Guyon :

I love Thee, Lord, but all the love is Thine,
For by Thy life I live.
I am as nothing, and rejoice to be
Emptied and lost and swallowed up in Thee.

Do we not often in common speech talk of one person as being wrapped up in another person—

Bruised Reeds and Smoking Wicks

the husband in the wife, or the mother in her children ? And if we look closely at the significance of such expressions we get at the secret of such enrobement. Trust and love are the two emotions which enwrap one person in another. Jesus Christ asks our love. To win it He laid down His life. No man can know Him for the Christ by proof and not know Him to be utterly love-worthy ; and when once he can say, ' I love Thee, Lord,' he will begin to be ' swallowed up ' in Him. The process will not be a single act. It will not be the work of a day nor of a year, but gradually being swallowed up in the Lord, the life of the Lord shall straighten his bent will and the Spirit of the Lord shall quicken the fire of his spirit till the black smoke is transformed into bright flame.

CONCERNING CHRIST'S GIFTS

THE HIGHER LIFE: *The New Birth*

'MORE ABUNDANTLY': *Growth in Grace*

THE FRIEND IN NEED: *The Holy Spirit*

THE HIGHER LIFE

That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit.—John iii. 6.

THE divine life which is the effect of self-surrender to Christ is never defined in the New Testament. It is referred to by suggestive symbols. It is said to be a 'begetting by God,' a 'new creation,' a 'resurrection'; and here in His famous conversation with Nicodemus, the Teacher come from God describes it as a 'New Birth.' By following the lead of some of the suggestions of His symbol we may come to a reasonably true and clear conception of the nature and development of the new life in Christ.

1. *It suggests that the higher life, like all life, is a mystery which must be experienced to be known.* Broadly speaking, there are two kinds of knowledge—scientific knowledge, which has its objects outside man's personality, and living knowledge, which has its objects within the soul, and only reveals

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

itself by the experiments or activities of the soul. No man can ever put a description of 'love' or 'beauty' or 'sorrow' into exact words, because they are inseparable from the life of the individual soul and cannot be written in words or repeated by one soul to another. If there should be a soul which has made no experiments in these matters, and has no capacity for making them, for that soul there are no such realities. The new birth is the beginning of the life we share with God, and the knowledge of it is living knowledge which reveals itself in the consciousness of the man who has surrendered himself by faith to Christ. The man who is not born again can no more know what it really means than a man born blind can understand the glories of a beautiful landscape.

2. *It suggests that the divine life is something deeper than moral reformation.* It is not primarily a change in a man's principles of conduct, in his moral character, or in his ways of acting. As a rule it is followed by a great and thorough moral reformation, but in that case the relation of new birth to moral reformation is like the relation between the root of a tree and the leaves of a tree, or

The Higher Life

it is like the relationship between cause and effect. It has to do with that which is behind all these. A man is more than his body and brain. He is distinct from all his tastes, habits, principles, ideas, and pursuits. These are but the furniture and characteristics of the man. The man himself is that living soul which hides behind the first personal pronoun. He is that which thinks and feels and acts, which *has* habits and principles and ideas, and the new birth is a change in the man himself with all his vast capacities and exalted destiny. As a consequence the change in habits, tastes, and character which follow the new Birth varies in many ways. In one man it is rapid and obvious, in another it is slow and comparatively slight. One man may be born again and have a life full of moral faults gradually being removed; another man may pass through that change of soul indicated by the new birth and at once obey the injunctions of morality with puritanical zeal. Why this is so will appear.

3. *It suggests that the divine life is a higher sort of life than we receive from our parents.* Without venturing into deep and perilous inquiries sug-

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

gested by the nature and origin of life, we may note the obvious fact that there are degrees of life. Down at the bottom of the scale there are creatures that can scarcely be said to live at all, but as you rise in the scale of being you come to higher and richer forms of life. An animal has a higher and richer life than a plant, and a man has a higher and richer life than an animal. That which forms the standard of height and riches is *capacity to respond* to external stimuli. Man's life is richer and higher than that of the animals, because he is born with capacity to respond to a wider range of stimuli.

Such degrees of life may be stated in another way:¹ Every individual life upon the earth comes into being with a material encasement. In the lower organisms this material encasement is coarse and thick and simple, and being so, it permits only a little of the truth of the universe to permeate through it. The being, so encased, lives but a very little. As we ascend in the scale of life we find this material encasement get more and more delicate and complex until, when

¹ Suggested by F. C. Schiller's *Riddle of the Sphinx*.

The Higher Life

Man is reached, it has become so delicate and complex that it permits a large amount of intelligence to pass through it; and therefore Man lives much more than any animal. Not only, however, is man's material encasement delicate and complex, but *it has pores* so thin that they are *capable of being ruptured* so as to let in gleams of the absolute life of a transcendent world—that transcendent world which Emerson spoke of so finely in his essay on the 'Oversoul,' saying, 'Language cannot paint it with colours. It is too subtle. It is undefinable, unmeasurable, but we know that it pervades and contains us.' It is this delicate and complex encasement which always permits intelligence to permeate it and has rupturable pores capable of admitting the life of a transcendent world which we receive in birth from our parents; and *the new birth is the rupturing of these thin pores, so that the transcendent life of God enters our very selves, and emerges into consciousness. It is not the addition of a new faculty, but the opening of the doors* through which come all those inspirations and revelations from the Eternal Presence by which our souls are vitalized, nourished, and enriched.

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

Our spirits are brought into touch with the living Spirit of God, so that we make our conscious home and environment in Him.

That which breaks the pores or opens the doors and lets in the 'Great Companion' is the Grace of God, but it is grace which comes only to those who make the venture of faith or self-surrender to the Lord Jesus Christ.

This new birth or breaking open has effects which are great and far-reaching.

It brings a new outlook upon all things.

When once the door is open and the thin rind is rent, and the Eternal Presence streams in, we wake up in our 'Father's House, who has hung the walls with pictures for us to see, and carpeted the floor with grass beautified with flower-patterns for us to walk upon, and loaded the table of life with dainties for us to eat. Sleep becomes His benediction on the day's work, and morning the opening of another door into the wonder-world of experience. Life is a drama in which He is the unseen but central figure, and we are His comrades in working out the great climax of the story.' That is the change the new birth works in our outlook

The Higher Life

upon *nature*. And every *man* we meet, no matter how puny or meagre or sinful, is seen to be an undeveloped wonder. The poor bedraggled creatures walking about city streets like animated clods cease to be creatures of the commonplace. We recognize their possible divinity, and realize how true and grand are the old words, 'Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; Thou crownest him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of Thy hands; Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet.'

It brings to us a conscious possibility of expansion which in itself is a pledge and promise of our immortality. We have only to see that the pores are kept open to find our nature filling out into the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. The Spirit witnesses with our spirit that we shall grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ till at last we come to the throne of God in heaven.

‘ MORE ABUNDANTLY ’

That they might have it more abundantly.—
John x. 10.

THE New Birth is the establishment of actual communion between the Spirit of God and the spirit of an individual man. In it the soul awakes to consciousness that it is related to an Infinite Soul. It is the realization of God's life in one's own life. God is life. He is the life that lives in all things.

God of the granite and the rose,
Soul of the sparrow and the bee,
The mighty tide of being flows
Through countless channels, Lord, from Thee;
It leaps to life in grass and flowers,
Through every grade of being runs,
While from creation's radiant towers
Its glory flames from stars and suns.

But He is much more than all that. He is a Person with a character. He not only can love, but He is love. He is the Prototype of our own personalities.

‘ More Abundantly ’

Speak to Him thou, for He hears, and Spirit with Spirit can meet.

Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet.

The New Birth is *the first conscious meeting* of our spirit with The Spirit; and all true religion is the ever-growing consciousness of union between our life and God's life.

Jesus Christ is the Mediator of this union. He came to earth that men might have life. In Him was the ‘ fullness ’ of the divine life, like living water in a perennial spring. It overflowed every channel of His being, shining from His eyes, radiating from His face, flowing from His lips, proceeding from His touch, streaming from His personality with the copiousness of a well of water bubbling up everlastingly. He came and *He is come* that men may have a constant and abundant inflow of the Divine Spirit through the inlet opened by the New Birth, and that the human spirit may be quickened, developed, and inspired for higher activities.

One of the most absorbing themes on which Jesus spoke was the illimitable power of progress characteristic of the soul of man. He regarded man's

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

spirit as containing the germs of possibilities so vast as to require immortality for their unfolding. 'Alone in all history Jesus estimated the greatness of man. One man was true to what is in you and me.' The divine eye of the Master always saw the greatness of human nature under the hard dreary surface of evil habit. Because He took account of these possibilities He cared for the degenerate and depraved. 'The worst person in all history was something to Him if He were nothing to the world.' 'Recall Christ,' says Walt Whitman, 'brother of rejected persons, brother of slaves, felons, idiots, and of insane, diseased persons.'

This illimitable possibility in man's nature proves itself in many ways. Let a man be fed to repletion with bread and work and thought, he is still unsatisfied. 'He climbs the loftiest peak which glistens in the sunshine, he stands on the mountain summit proud and buoyant with the sense of victory and freedom; but there is something in him which aspires still higher, which beats about for a pathway beyond. He studies Nature, he masters her forces and methods, he turns to

‘ More Abundantly ’

account her boundless wealth of resource ; but still he craves and longs to be at the whence and the whither—that mystery of life which beats back vision, and holds a sphinx-like silence to his most eager questions. He goes forth as a conqueror, round him stand quelled or curbed ignorance, disease, and anarchy ; within his grasp are knowledge, order, wealth, and health ; but yet he is not thereby lifted into peace.’ All this is true because every man is a bundle of latent, immeasurable possibilities, because every man is ‘ made for God, and cannot find rest until he finds *Him*.’

But to tell what GOD may mean to a man, even whilst he lives upon the earth, would exhaust the measure of a lifetime. God is higher than the utmost heights. His wisdom has no borderland of ignorance. He fills boundless space with the splendour of His ever active Presence. Man knows no terms by which to compute the vastness of His Eternal Being. And when once the New Birth has been consummated in the soul of the man who gives all to Christ in full and glad surrender, he has but to keep his soul’s inlet open, earnestly striving to keep in touch with the Spirit, to find the life of God

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

streaming into his own life in never-ceasing ministries of Grace. We are intended to grow in grace and in the knowledge of Christ, and to continue in progressive appropriation of the divine life.

There is one indispensable condition and one effective instrument for keeping the soul open to the inflow of the divine life, both mentioned by our Lord Jesus Christ.

The indispensable condition is suggested by His memorable words, 'Except ye become as little children.' We need not be learned, we need not be gifted, but we must be childlike. Jesus enforced this as the necessary condition for communion with God. To be childlike is to have the characteristic marks of the spirit of a child. There are at least three characteristic marks of a childlike spirit. *Receptivity* is one. A child willingly takes what his parent has to offer him, ready at all times to let himself be lifted up and blessed because he is so free from all self-conceit. A child has no fear of the past and no anxiety for the future because he depends so completely on his superior. He receives, he does not try to earn. Another mark of a childlike spirit is *trustfulness*.

‘ More Abundantly ’

A child has no anxieties because he has no doubts about his parents. There are no reserves in his trust. Yet a third mark of the childlike spirit is *that wonder which is equivalent to worship* in those who are grown up. The child lives in a wonderful world. There is nothing common or unclean for him. To be so free from self-conceit that you are willing to receive, to be so trustful that you have no anxious cares, to have the open eye and feeling heart—that is to be childlike; and ‘ unless ye become as little children ye shall by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.’

The effective instrument is prayer. ‘ If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good gifts unto them that ask Him?’ In words like these did Jesus teach the necessity and duty of prayer. Not only by precept but by example did He teach it. His life was full of prayer. Constantly He found occasions and hours when He was alone with God. Few details are given of His lonely vigils. What He said in those quiet hours we do not know; but the very fact that He needed to pray, and did pray so

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

regularly, does more than any words to explain the real meaning and nature of prayer. For Him prayer could not be a means of changing an unpropitious God into a propitious one, or of changing the mind of God. It must have been because He knew that God was gracious, and because for Him prayer was the communion of a Son with His Father, that not once only, we may be sure, but often, 'He continued all night in prayer to God.' One of the commonest of all objections urged against prayer in these days is that it is an attempt at changing the mind of God and of interfering with natural law, or the sequence of cause and effect. But if prayer is the communion of the living soul with the living God, as it really is, according to the teaching and practice of the Master, then the question of natural law entirely disappears. It is irrelevant; for prayer does not come within the range of the laws of the natural world any more than the New Birth does. Prayer for Jesus was unrestrained converse with God; and if, prompted by a sense of our relation to God as His children, we converse with Him about the labours of the day, the cares

‘ More Abundantly ’

of our home, the lives of our friends, the disposal of our property, the future which is before us, *no matter what*, every act of prayer shall serve to fill out our nature into the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

And when in *silent* awe we wait,
And word and sign forbear,
The hinges of the golden gate
Move soundless to our prayer.

If we become as little children and hold converse with the Most High we shall be changed from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord dwelling within.

THE FRIEND IN NEED

The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost.—
John xiv. 26.

JONATHAN EDWARDS, the Calvinist divine, is reported to have said: ‘To many I fear the term “Holy Ghost” is only a technical term belonging to the science of theology, having no simple everyday significance. When some of us say we believe in the Holy Ghost we do so because it is in the Creed and we are expected to believe it. We pray for the Holy Ghost because it is the custom so to pray, but our ideas about the Holy Ghost are vague and confused, because the term has been hardened into an ecclesiastical dogma, and embarrassed and beset with the speculative questions and disputes of centuries of theological strife. Nothing, however, can be simpler or more practical than the New Testament teaching about the Holy Ghost.

The Friend in Need

Though we often read in the New Testament of the Father loving the Son and of the Son loving the Father, we never once read of the Father and the Son loving the Holy Ghost, because the Holy Ghost is the divine love itself, the love of the Father and the Son. We often read about the Father and the Son loving men, but we never once read about the Holy Ghost loving men, because the Holy Ghost is Himself the very love of the Father and the Son which flows out in time and grace.'

Thus Jonathan Edwards, and what he says is true, *because the New Testament does not regard the Holy Ghost from the standpoint of the inner relations of the Godhead, but from the standpoint of man's needs.* The doctrine of the Trinity of the Godhead is not stated in the New Testament. It is a reality which was discovered to be the foundation of New Testament doctrine some centuries after the days of the apostles. The definition of this foundation is a very complex and difficult one. It is wonderful how, when the mind begins to get an inkling of its significance, it enriches and completes those truths in the New Testament which he who

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology runs may read and understand; but with the profound and abstruse truths of the deep-lying doctrine of the Trinity, or the inner relation of the Godhead, we have nothing to do. The simple and powerful teaching of the gospel about the work of the Holy Ghost is my subject.

The word, with a rich group of similar titles, stands as a name for *the activity of God in the soul of man for the accomplishment of man's salvation*. The living God in the living soul working away as a glorious energy for its liberation from all vileness and its elevation into all goodness—that is the New Testament doctrine of the Holy Spirit. That Spirit as He is conceived by the New Testament is not a mere impersonal influence exercised upon the soul of man, but God Himself as a Spirit in contact with the human spirit. It will help us much to try and get clear and true notions about what the gospel tells us on this subject.

The very first suggestion is that *His operations on man's spirit begin in that mystic region of personality which is beyond the cognizance of sense, and of which consciousness itself only catches glimpses*. Modern psychology helps us a little.

The Friend in Need

During recent years the human personality has been studied as never before. Various experimenters in the science of mind have shown in a way not to be ignored that there is a great deal more going on in every man, and at all times, than he is directly conscious of. They tell us that we can contemplate and we can feel what goes on within the soul until we reach a certain imaginary line, but beneath that line there are tremendous ranges of our inner being of the existence of which we may be sure, but which it is impossible thoroughly to explore. It is in this silent, awful, mystic region of the spirit that the Spirit of God begins His work. It is possible to find human counterparts of His working in this mystic sphere. Suppose a schoolboy is cross and sulky and defiant of the regulations of his school, and a kind-hearted master takes him aside and talks with him, and succeeds *in putting some of his own spirit into the lad*, and the lad goes back to his work with a new expression on his face; he becomes docile and willing and industrious. Whose spirit is working in the lad? It is both the spirit of the lad and the spirit of the master. You cannot dis-

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

tinguish between the two. You cannot separate them or analyse them. The lad cannot do so himself. All he is conscious of is a desire to do better ; but in the ranges of his inner being the spirit of the master is working away for his ennoblement. It is a common thing in the history of battles to read of officers putting spirit into disheartened men and then leading them over difficulties which appeared insurmountable. Whose spirit was in the men at such times ? Their own and also the spirit of the officer. We cannot separate the two. The union is a mystery, but it is there.

Such illustrations are essentially imperfect in many ways, but they help to make intelligible to us the deep truth that Religion is the Spirit of God operating in the soul of man. Most of the operations which determine what we do and how we do it go on beneath the threshold of consciousness. ' Our conscious life of the moment is but a bubble heaved up from the subconscious life below.' That side of a man's self opens Godward. It is there that the immediate communion between the soul and God takes place ; and every man has ' master moments ' in his history, when he catches fitful

The Friend in Need

gleams of the Eternal and hears the voice of the Spirit of God, when he feels the Divine Life flowing into him, vitalizing and inspiring and uplifting him. In so far as any man seeks His power and yields to His influence,

Those master moments grow *less rare*,
He *oftener* feels that nameless air
Come rumouring from we know not where ;
And touches at whiles
Fantastic shores, the fringes fair
Of fairy isles ;
And hails the mystic bird that brings
News from the inner court of things,
The eternal courier dove whose wings
Are never furled ;
And hears the bubbling of the springs
That feed the world.¹

The Spirit ' strives ' with his spirit.

It were a vain endeavour,
Though I should gaze for ever
On that green light that lingers in the west,
I may not hope from outward forms to win
The passion and the life whose fountains are within ;²

but at least we may learn this much, that *in the intercourse between the Holy Spirit of God and the*

¹ William Watson. ² Coleridge.

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

soul of man in this mystic region of the self there is a threefold series of processes. There are the preliminary processes, there is the awakening process, and there are the assimilative processes; or, to use the language of theology, there is prevenient grace, there is conversion, and there are the processes of regeneration and sanctification.

1. *The preliminary processes.* There is nothing more certain in life than that we are surrounded by moral dangers and moral obstacles which ought to be overcome. The road of life seems infested with moral foes. It is equally certain that every man is aware of something within for which we have no better name than 'conscience,' warning him of the danger which exists, and

Whatever creed be taught or land be trod,
Man's conscience *is the oracle of God.*

Sometimes this voice is so real that it seems to come from without rather than from within. 'A very distinguished man was one day walking in Edinburgh with a friend, when they came to one of the numerous wynds which lead away from the main thoroughfare into the midst of huge and

The Friend in Need

gloomy buildings. There the distinguished man stopped and entered the wynd as if listening. After a moment or two he returned and explained his curious action by saying that in his youth he had been tempted to do something which would have wrecked his life, but just as he came to that wynd there sounded in his ears such a vivid warning as made it morally impossible for him to proceed on his course of wrongdoing. He felt sure that voice was from above, for his whole nature until that instant seemed to have been set on what would have led to moral ruin.¹ Similar experiences are so common that it would be safe to say there is no normal man who has not had them; and the teaching of the New Testament is that every thought and every feeling which urges any man in the direction of purity or holds him back from evil is a movement of the Holy Spirit of God within him. He has such thoughts and feelings and 'fancies' because of the indwelling presence of the Living God.

2. *The awakening process.* No man lives for very long before he is aware that such

¹ Related in Dr. Amory Bradford's *Growth of the Soul*.

Pèrmanent Elements in Christian Theology

processes as have been suggested reach a climax, after which he is either better or worse. There is a wonderful passage in a book of fiction about the Wild North-west and the Cowboys which is referred to by Professor Ramsay in his book *The Education of Christ*. Speaking about one of the cowboys, the author of the book of fiction says: 'Two days ago he was riding back from an unsuccessful search after strayed horses, and suddenly, all in the lifting of a hoof, the weird prairie had gleamed into eerie life, had dropped the veil and spoken to him, while the breeze stopped and the sun stood still for a flash waiting for an answer. And he, his heart in a grip of ice, uttered a yell of horror as he dashed his spurs into his panic-stricken horse, in a mad desire to escape from the Awful Presence that filled all the earth and sky from edge to edge of vision.' The author says that an experience like that was well known among the cowboys, but known without words, for no man who experienced it spoke willingly about it afterwards. *Only the man would be changed.* Some began to be more reckless, as if a dumb blasphemy rankled in their hearts and breasts. Others became quieter,

The Friend in Need

looking squarely at any danger as they faced it, but continued ahead as though quietly confident that nothing happened save as the gods ordained. The author does not mean to suggest that any physical miracle took place, e.g. that the sun actually stood still; but he does mean to suggest that even a rough cowboy, living a rough and vicious life, has one moment in his life that comes somehow when he is suddenly and certainly conscious of the touch of the divine, and if he responds he is ever after lifted up and strengthened; but if he sneers and rebels and shuts his heart, he becomes more reckless than ever, and seems to be abandoned by the Spirit of nobility and given over to the spirit of vileness.

In the life of every full-grown man there has been at least one moment when he has been consciously arrested and made to think, when he has been moved by a mighty influence to abandon the low, the selfish, and the unspiritual, and to follow the pure, the true, and the high. From that moment there has been progress more or less continuous in the direction of the highest, or degeneration more or less constant towards the lowest;

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology and whether the set of his spirit has been in one direction or the other depends on whether he has yielded to the influence of the Spirit or has resisted it. That he has only one chance it would not be true to say, but it is true to say that he has only one *supreme* chance. There is a tide in the spiritual life of all men which is to be taken at the full flood only once.

3. *The assimilative processes.* The New Testament often uses the phrases 'Sons of God' and 'Children of God' as descriptive of an acquired character. They are used to denote a character which does not belong to all men as such. At the same time the universal Fatherhood of God is one of the most distinctive notes of New Testament teaching. The explanation seems to be as follows: By teaching the universal Fatherhood the New Testament means that in His relation to men God is more than 'Creator' and more than 'Guardian.' He created all things, and He cares for sparrows. But man is of more value than many sparrows. 'Nature is God's fabric, man is God's child.' And when the gospel tells us this, a suggestive human symbol is

The Friend in Need

used to indicate the deep truth that man has a spiritual nature akin to God's, who is spirit. God gave it to man as his birthright. By virtue of that gift He makes distinctions between right and wrong, hate and love, tenderness and cruelty, avarice and benevolence. God is righteous, God is Truth, God is Love; and in so far as he is able to distinguish these man shares the nature of God. In this sense we may say that all men, wicked and good, are the children of God. But to be 'Sons of God' in the sense in which all men may be said to be so, is not to be 'Sons of God' in the sense in which that phrase is used so often in the gospel. To become sons of God we must share the life of God and all its characteristics of righteousness and truth and love. This is within the range of human experience, because God as a Spirit constantly approaches the spirit of a converted man for the purpose of holy communication and influence. St. John says of Jesus that 'As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become sons of God.' And by every act of self-surrender to Him we receive a larger and still larger measure of the Divine Spirit, till at length we are changed from glory

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology
to glory by the Spirit, till He thinks through
our brain, and loves through our heart, and fights
for right and truth and purity through our will, and
gives us both the victory over sin and the likeness
of the Lord.

CONCERNING CHRIST'S DISCIPLES

THE HALL-MARK OF A CHRISTIAN
CHRISTIAN EGOISM
FIT FOR THE KINGDOM
SELF-HELP IN SALVATION

THE HALL-MARK OF A CHRISTIAN

And He said unto them all, If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.—Luke ix. 23.

It is generally acknowledged that no more fatal delusion has ever taken possession of the Christian Church than the delusion about the marks of a Christian; and it has been said that the most perplexing and disheartening thing about the religious life of to-day is that there are so many people who have no clear and definite conception of what it really means to be a Christian.

If we were to go to some circles and ask what we must do in order to be followers of Christ we should undoubtedly be told we must read certain books, make confession of sin to a properly authorized and ordained priest, attend regularly certain services, take regularly certain sacraments, and engage in certain religious works.

If we went to other sources for an answer to the

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

question we should be told that we could not be Christians without believing certain dogmas. Every one who knows anything about the Protestant Reformation knows that the chief element in the teaching of Luther was 'Justification by Faith.' That teaching was right and necessary, and it is right and necessary now; but Luther himself anticipated the danger that would come from placing such tremendous emphasis on one element in the gospel. He warned Protestants to 'Look well to it after he was dead that they did not try to do God's work for Him by drawing up plans of Salvation depending on the acceptance of certain doctrines as directed by some authority.' Yet that is just what has happened, for there is no Protestant community of any size in existence which has not its creeds and catechisms, and that does not say to men with varying degrees of emphasis, 'If you do not believe this and this you cannot be a true Christian.'

Now no sane man would dispute the value and importance of creeds and ceremonies, but both are accidents of the kingdom proclaimed by our Lord. If we go to the New Testament for an answer

The Hall-mark of a Christian

to our question, the answer comes to us from the lips of the Lord Himself in simple, practical, and suggestive terms, 'If any man would come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me.'

We are familiar with the signs stamped by Government assay offices on articles of gold and silver as a mark of their legal quality. They are called the 'Hall-mark'; and this saying of the Master's indicates the Hall-mark of a Christian. There are three signs in it which we will examine in detail, but let us lay it to heart ere we do so that being a Christian is not easy. Jesus never made the way of life attractive or interesting. His call is to the heroic. The quest for salvation is no child's play. It is a quest for men who are ready to risk all. The first mark of the man who seeks it is

SELF-DENIAL.

That is a distinctly Christian virtue. It was never thought of as a moral excellence before Jesus spoke of it. It is a sign which, when it is fully inscribed upon a man's character, indicates the highest moral attainment known to the human

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

mind. It is something higher than self-control. Self-control is the firm and rigid repression of the lower nature, the rule of those passions and desires which war against the soul, the mastery of all the appetites and lusts which belong to the body. If a man does not practise self-control he is lost; but he may keep all the desires and passions of his lower nature under the heel of the most vigorous will, and yet have no trace of the virtue of self-denial in him.

Self-discipline is a stage higher in the scale of virtue than self-control. It differs from self-control because whilst self-control holds in check the lower part of human nature self-discipline cultures the higher—the mind or the spirit. ‘Self-control keeps the weeds down, self-discipline tends the vine, prunes it, and waters it, that it may bring forth fruit.’ Self-discipline is part of the duty of a Christian; but he may culture his mind and his temperament until he is admired of all who know him, and yet he may not know what self-denial is after the pattern of Jesus.

If we think our way to the essence of these forms of conduct we see that the centre of gravity in each one of them is ‘self.’ A man may practise

The Hall-mark of a Christian

both self-control and self-discipline to perfection, and yet all the while be dominated by a single figure, and that figure himself. There is said to be a certain room in a palace on the Continent where so many mirrors are hung upon the walls and in such positions that whichever way you turn you are confronted by an image of yourself multiplied some hundreds of times over. A man may mutilate his body, he may give all his goods away, he may practise self-control and exercise self-discipline, and do it all to win 'a corruptible crown,' because the object of all his effort is selfish. But when a man practises self-denial in the sense in which it was taught by Jesus he *entirely forgets himself*. The centre of gravity, so to speak, of his conduct is outside the limits of his own personality. He has the sort of spirit that enabled St. Paul to say, 'I no longer live, but Christ liveth in me.' It is as if Jesus said, 'If any man would come after Me, let him forget himself, trust in God, do the next duty, go round by Calvary if the road lies there, seeking the kingdom of God.' The man who is practising self-denial has lost himself in devotion to his Master, counting it a pure privilege to serve

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

Him and to wear himself out in His service. To deny self is to hand over the keys of the citadel of one's life to Christ the King, and say, 'Reign over me, Lord Jesus'; it is to have burning in the heart a 'passion for Jesus' such as has been the secret spring of all the noblest deeds in the lives of the holiest of the human race.

CROSS-BEARING.

There are many crosses we do not '*take up*,' crosses which are laid upon us, which we are compelled to carry, as Simon of Cyrene was compelled to carry the cross of Jesus whether he would or no. 'There is a cross in every lot,' a something unpleasant in our personal life or our circumstances which is laid upon us without our wills being consulted. Speaking in this way St. Paul's 'cross' was his 'thorn in the flesh'; and that of a given individual may be some personal suffering which bows him down and is the cause of distress and anguish. There are people in the world who have to carry secret crosses of body or of spirit year in and year out. It was not a cross of this kind that Jesus was thinking of when He called on each man to take up his

The Hall-mark of a Christian

cross. It is a cross Jesus asks each man *of his own free will to take up*, and not a cross that a man is compelled to bear whether he wills to do so or not. What that cross is like we can best understand by recalling what the cross of Jesus meant to Him. It is not enough when we speak of the cross of Christ to think of the crucified body, the quivering flesh, the dripping blood, the physical pain, and the last gasp, much less of the rude cross-beams, the nails, and the hammers. All that terrible vision is but a symbol of the deep and awful truth that He was bearing the sins of the world. That was the real cross of Jesus. 'He tasted death for every man.' And when He said, 'If any man would come after Me, let him take up his cross,' He was stating the law of all true ministry: that each man must give himself as a sacrifice to God and a gift to his fellow men. The cross was great love going out in great service, and the message which comes to us over the ages from Calvary is that we too must serve and save by the giving of self.

All through life I see a cross

Where sons of God yield up their breath.

There is no gain except by loss,

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

There is no life except by death;
There is no vision but by faith,
No glory but in bearing shame,
Nor justice but in taking blame;
And that eternal passion saith,
Be emptied of glory and right and name.¹

FOLLOWING.

That means more than imitation. Jesus fasted forty days and nights, and therefore men have said that to follow Jesus means to fast and keep lonely vigils. Jesus was poor and had no home, therefore it has been said that to follow Him men must put away their possessions and live in poverty, trusting to God for food and shelter. Such mechanical copying of externals stands self-condemned. The disciple does not copy the Master's actions, he acts in the Master's spirit. To follow Jesus is to catch the spirit of the Lord and to have His mind, so that the love and righteousness and purity which inspired every word and deed of His may pass into the words and deeds of our daily life.

To forget yourself, to give yourself, and to 'have this mind which was also in Christ Jesus': that is indeed a hard and narrow way, and yet it is the

¹ W. C. Smith.

The Hall-mark of a Christian

way of life. It is the way of happiness. Jesus came that men might have life and be blessed, and blessedness is nothing but happiness raised to the highest degree. If a man has lost himself in any great cause, if he has forgotten himself in any other person's suffering, he knows that in those hours and at those times only was his life full and rich and blessed. It is an everlasting law which has its roots in the necessity of things, that 'Whosoever would find his life must lose it.' It is by giving of self that we find ourselves, that we find our fellow men, and that we find God.

CHRISTIAN EGOISM

Take heed to yourselves . . . that ye may be accounted worthy.—Luke xxi. 34-6.

THE principle of self-care is constantly enunciated in the teaching of Jesus. 'What shall it profit a man if he should gain the whole world and lose his own *self*.' 'The kingdom of God is within you.' Every man is given charge of that kingdom, and is responsible for making the most of it. Jesus realized to the full the individuality of the soul, its power, its responsibility, and its destiny; and taught men that to win their souls, to preserve and nurture them, is a primary duty. Self-sacrifice for Him did not mean the destruction of self but the giving up of self; and the higher the quality of the self the nobler the gift.

In our day we find it strangely difficult to comprehend the value of the individual soul. Practical selfishness abounds, but the principle of self-care is

Christian Egoism

disregarded. The particular problems with which the human mind is now perplexed are social rather than individual. 'Society' has taken the dominant place in men's thoughts, it has become paramount over the individual, it pushes the individual more and more into the background, it asserts itself against him as of far higher value. The duty of social sympathy is exalted on high, and under its dread predominance a man is afraid to ask the self-engrossing question, 'Am I saved?'

And yet the most solemn duty laid upon a man is that of taking heed to himself. The saving of the self is the true end of life. The rights of personality are the only fundamental rights any man possesses. This life and its circumstances are to be the tools whereby we mould ourselves to perfect being. It is true, as we found in the last chapter, that the message which comes to us over the ages from Calvary is 'Give yourself'; but unless the self be made worthy the gift will be of little value.

We may collect New Testament teaching on the subject around three big words.

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

(I) SELF-RECOGNITION.

That means something more and deeper than is meant by the much-quoted motto of the ancient Sophists, 'Know thyself.' A man knows himself in that sense if he understands the actual condition of his body and his mind in relation to their surroundings; but 'the animating spring of all improvement in individuals and in societies is *not their knowledge of the actual, but their conception of the possible*. To the personal conscience there is ever present a higher than it has reached, a light beyond, which throws a perpetual shadow on the track behind.'¹

For this *conception of the possible*, and the self-development which depends on it, there must be times in every man's life when he is alone with the great ideals.

Shop each day and all day long,
Friend, your good angel slept, your star
Suffered eclipse, fate did you wrong!
From where these sorts of treasures are,
There should our hearts be—Christ, *how far*!

'The world is badly served by those who are always in it. Those who would serve their fellows

¹ Dr. Martineau.

Christian Egoism

best must learn to disappear, to withdraw, to go aside, to have times when they set aside mere popular or common measures and policies, and stand as open as they can to the naked truth, look with unveiled face upon the ideal vision, hush the common voices of club and council and newspaper to hear what is whispered from the realms of ideal life.' Only by such methods can any man come to a conception of that which it is possible for his own nature to reach, and such self-recognition is the first condition of self-realization.

(2) SELF-DISCIPLINE.

For want of it we often do violence to ourselves, first of all, *in ordinary and vulgar ways*. The 'push' and 'self-assertion' so common, and often thought to be so necessary in these democratic days, is most effective in depreciating the quality of the self.

So, friend, your shop was all your house,
Its front astonishing the street,
Inviting view from man and mouse,
To what diversity of treat.
Behind its glass—the single sheet.¹

¹ Robert Browning.

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

Most men have to pay an awful price for being in the front of the crowd.

Another strong corrosive is bad temper. 'He who ruleth his spirit is greater than he who taketh a city,' and the man who does not regulate his temper runs serious risk of losing his soul.

Then again for want of discipline we often do violence to ourselves *in nobler and more tragic ways*. By errors of judgement or false notions of self-sacrifice we injure ourselves. There is the error of judgement which imagines self-control to mean that an individual must constantly be restraining his nature, always be reined in, and governed by considerations of prudence. There is the notion also that self-sacrifice means the submersion of self. In one of Ibsen's dramas the husband of Nora says to her, 'Before all else you are a wife and a mother,' and Nora replies, 'I no longer think so. I think that before all else I am a human being, or at least I have to try to become one. I know very well that most people agree with you, and that books say something of the sort; but I cannot be satisfied any longer with what people say and with what is in books; I must think things over for

Christian Egoism

myself, and try to get clear about them.' The woman's larger self was waking, and she had begun to recognize that it was false sentiment to put aside her own personal tastes and ideals and interests and become practically the slave of her husband and child, with no right to live out her own life or to be anything on her own account. The most sacred thing about us is personality, which no one has a right to invade.

Shall I a sonnet sing you about myself?

Do I live in a house you would like to see?

Is it scant of gear, has it store of pelf?

Unlock my heart with a sonnet-key,

Invite the world, as my betters have done?

'Take notice: this building remains on view,
Its suites of reception every one,

Its private apartment and bedroom, too;

For a ticket, apply to the Publisher.'

No: thanking the public, I must decline.

A peep through my window, if folk prefer;

*But, please you, no foot over threshold of mine.*¹

(3) SELF-SURRENDER.

There is a story told about the late Professor Henry Drummond which will illustrate this atti-

¹ Robert Browning.

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

tude of the self. A lady once asked him to speak to her coachman, who had been giving way to drink. Drummond did not like being called on in that way to cure people's souls; but he felt he might do something, and determined to try. He went and talked with the man. He said to him, 'Suppose you were on the box and your horses were running away downhill and you lost control of them, what would you do?' 'Oh,' said the man, 'I could do nothing.' 'But suppose,' said Drummond, 'there were some one sitting by you on the box stronger than you who could control them, what would you do?' 'Oh,' said the man, 'I should give him the reins.' 'Ah,' said Drummond, 'your life is running away with you, your passions and appetites are carrying you downhill, and you cannot control yourself. But believe me there is one stronger than you by your side, who offers to take control and make you and your life what they should be. What will you do?' The man, seeing the point, said, 'I will give Him the reins.'

This is the saving faith of the gospel. It is not a mere sentiment, nor a taking things for

Christian Egoism

granted; but it is a full and glad surrender of self to the highest, and a consequent accession of power to fulfil His will who is able to keep us from stumbling and to present us faultless in the presence of His glory.

FIT FOR THE KINGDOM

Fit for the kingdom of God.—Luke ix. 62.

It is not easy to form a clear and complete idea of the meaning of the expression ‘the kingdom of God’ as it fell from the lips of the Lord. There are two reasons for this. One is that it was one of the thought-forms common in Christ’s day, used by Him as a mould into which to pour His gospel; the other is that the phrase and its equivalent, ‘the kingdom of heaven,’ so often found in St. Matthew, was used by Him as a name for a complete whole, and also as a name for different parts of that whole. In much the same way we might use the expression ‘The kingdom of King Edward.’ If we happen to be speaking about Great Britain we might call it ‘The kingdom of King Edward’; or if we happen to be talking about India we may call that continent ‘the kingdom of King Edward’; if we happen to be speak-

Fit for the Kingdom

ing of some island in the far-off seas we may use the same phrase about it, and in doing so we use a term which is applied to the whole vast British Empire, as a name for a part of that same Empire. So the phrase, 'The kingdom of God,' as it was used by Jesus, signified in its completeness that state in which God exercises complete rule and His will is absolutely paramount; but again and again Jesus used the phrase with reference to some small part or other of that state. The phrase is not used to represent different ideas, but it is used to represent different elements of the same idea. Sometimes when Jesus used the phrase it was in reference to the world of thoughts and feelings within each man's breast, and therefore it is right for us to think of 'the kingdom of God' as existing within us; but that is not *all the truth* about it. Sometimes Jesus used the words when He was speaking about His Church, and so we come to think of the kingdom as a concrete and visible organization. That also is true, but it is *not all the truth*. Jesus was sometimes speaking about unseen facts and forces, and He called that unseen world 'the kingdom of God,' and therefore we sometimes think of the kingdom

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

as a kingdom of spirits loyal to the Lord in the past, the present, and the future. That also is true, but *it is not all the truth*. Sometimes Jesus was speaking of that ideal time in the future when 'each shall to the other be as brother unto brother,' and He called that time 'the kingdom of God'; therefore we sometimes think of the kingdom as a state which is not yet but to be realized in the future. That also is true, but *it is not all the truth*. We need to put all these truths together, and others like them, if we would form a complete conception of 'the kingdom of God.'

It is a great family in which men are united under the common Fatherhood of God. It is the social universe in which we are living in so far as it is truly good and filled with good men of every sort who live true lives and do God's will. It is our own inner thoughts and feelings in so far as these are under the direct rule of God. It is all these combined; and it is now and here and everywhere; it is also eternal. The sort of men who belong to it and the kind of kingdom it is will become more clear if we consider what sort of men are 'fit for the kingdom.'

Fit for the Kingdom

The general idea of 'fitness' is one of the fashionable ideas of our day. It finds expression in such words as 'adaptability' and 'efficiency.' Fitness is said to be the secret of the survival of any form of organized life. In 'adaptability' lies the secret of the enjoyment and fulfilment of life. 'Efficiency' determines commercial success. The idea has its Christian outlook; and our question now is, 'What is it that makes a man an efficient member of the kingdom of God?'

The Master's words in this place are: 'No man having put his hand to the plough and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God.' That is a parable in miniature, and one of the chief characteristics of parabolic teaching is that it stimulates thought, and leaves each man to find an interpretation for himself. To me this picture of a ploughman at his toil suggests such ideas as follow:

1. *Service is one of the conditions of fitness for the kingdom of God.* The idle man is not fit. But there is a wide difference between the sort of service which fits a man for the kingdom of God and the work any man may do for the sake of earning his bread. The service which 'fits' is not rendered

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

for fee or reward, but for love and honour. It is work done for the good you can do, and not for the good you can get. 'The wages of every noble work lie in heaven or else nowhere. Not in Bank of England bills, or any of the most improved establishments of banking or money changing, needest thou, heroic soul, present account of thy earnings. Human banks and labour banks know thee not, or know thee only after generations and centuries have passed away and thou art clean gone from rewarding. . . . The brave man has to give his life and work away. Thou wilt never sell thy life or any part of it in any adequate manner. Give it then, like a royal heart. Let the price be nothing. Thou hast then, in a certain sense, got all for it.' Rank in the scale of life as it has been arranged by God is determined by the amount of work done for love. It has long been recognized that among the lower forms of animal life there is no evidence of voluntary service being rendered, but as you rise in the scale of life you come across the first rudiments of work done for love. In the care of the cat for her kittens, the care of the hen for her brood, and all other cases of parental instinct, we have the

Fit for the Kingdom

first crude beginnings of the operation of the principle of work for the good of others, or 'Altruism,' to use the language of philosophy; and as we rise in the scale of intelligence we find much higher examples until we come to man himself. And if we attempt to rise in thought higher than human life to the highest life we can imagine, and if we accept the highest and best revelation that has come to us from God, we find that He is God because He renders so much service. *He is Love*, and love is that principle which moves a person to work at his own cost for the good of others. To do that is to serve, and everywhere in the gospel we are taught that fitness for the kingdom of God depends on ability to render such service. 'He that would be greatest in the kingdom of heaven, let him become the servant of all,' said our Lord; and St. Paul declares that Christ Himself has the name which is above every name, and is highly exalted in the kingdom of God because He made Himself the lowliest of all servants and became obedient unto death.

2. *'No man having put his hand to the plough and looking back is fit.'* Therefore, *'single-*

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

mindfulness is another mark of fitness. The principle of single-mindedness always held first rank in the example and teaching of the Lord. The man who would enter the kingdom must be prepared to give up all and follow Him. There must be no looking back when once the journey is started. Jesus was always severe upon impulse unsupported by stability, and He always praised faithfulness more than He praised talents. 'If thine eye be single,' said He, 'thy whole body shall be full of light,' but not otherwise. This single-mindedness proves itself in various ways in actual life. For one thing, it manifests itself in frank and outspoken conviction. It is not good to be narrow-minded, nor is it good to 'utter brawling judgements unashamed,' but it is equally bad to be fickle and ungrounded and uncertain in the faith. To be like a sponge, which sucks moisture pure or foul, wherever it is found, and draw in one opinion one day and another the next, according to the bias of the religious paper we read or the theology of the preacher we happen to hear, is to be unfit for the kingdom of God. The person who is fit gets his hand on the plough and

Fit for the Kingdom

keeps it there no matter how strong the winds blow and the keen airs bite. He takes his stand somewhere. He is true to some cause. He does believe in something with all his soul. He can always be relied upon. He is always found in his place. He endeavours to serve, not defiantly, not contemptuously, not vain-gloriously, not splendidly; but just keeping his place, he does his best for Christ's sake. That is to be single-minded; and nothing can be clearer or more uncompromising than this condition that Jesus again and again lays down for His followers.

3. *The man who puts his hand to the plough and looks not back will cut a straight furrow; therefore, 'straightness' is another mark of fitness for the kingdom of God.* David seems to have had a foregleam of this when, in answer to the question, 'Who shall dwell in God's holy hill?' he replied, 'He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart. He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour. In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the Lord.

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

He that sweareth to his own hurt and changeth not. He that putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh a reward against the innocent.' And Isaiah appears to have had this psalm in his mind when, in answer to the question, 'Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire of God's presence?' he wrote, 'He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of bloodshed, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil.' It would be well if, in these days, we realized all this as we ought. 'It is an age of self-indulgence, and our temptation all along the line is to make religion easy.' But that cannot be done. None but the fit are admitted to the kingdom. 'And one said unto Him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And He said unto them, Strive to enter in at the narrow door, for many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter in and shall not be able.'

SELF-HELP IN SALVATION

Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.—Phil. ii. 12.

LIKE the word 'faith' the word 'salvation' is a very spacious word, and has many shades of meaning. Sometimes one of its special contents is brought out into emphasis and sometimes another, according to the peculiar fashion in which the one vast and perpetual problem of the soul's well-being presents itself for the time being. Sometimes attention is fixed on the terrible problem of sin, and then salvation stands for deliverance from the guilt and power of this alien tyranny. Sometimes the thought of the judgement of God is felt to be pressing upon us with irresistible violence. The one supreme concern is how we may meet and survive the just judgement of the Most High; and in such case 'salvation' means to find our justification in the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ. Sometimes the

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

social tragedies with which we are surrounded press their awful urgency home upon our spirits, and then 'salvation' means the elimination of injustice and cruelty and suffering from the conditions of life.

All this is true, but it is not all the truth. It would be difficult, if it be not impossible, to put all the truth in a single sentence; but if we remember that man *as an individual* was generally in the minds of the writers of the New Testament, and that 'salvation' meant for them moral character brought to such a state of completion that there is no longer any peril for the soul, either from the just judgement of God or the liability to moral fall, we shall get as near to the truth as is necessary for our purpose. Salvation means to escape from a lower life into a higher life. It makes a complete man of one who is only in semblance a man or only half a man. It means to be chaste and noble in temperament, to be illumined in our hidden thoughts and dispositions, and to wear the glory of God. That is a destiny each man has to work out for himself, and my purpose now is to mention some of the inevitable conditions of that high

Self-help in Salvation

endeavour. What is it to work out one's own salvation *with fear and trembling*? There are three common words which may be used to analyse the attitude of spirit indicated by the words 'fear and trembling.' They are 'Serious,' 'Simple,' 'Resolute.'

1. *Serious.* That word, however, has certain associations which require elimination when it is used in this regard. It is often used to describe deportment—the carriage of a person who is staid and sedate, the airs put on by the sort of person who studiously avoids everything light or laughable; and it is often used as an epithet for those most offensive young people who assume the marks of piety which generally belong to old age. For such reasons it is said that the late Dr. Arnold of Rugby always substituted the word 'earnest' for the word 'serious' when he was addressing young men. But the word 'serious' means more than earnestness. It includes 'sincerity'; and to be sincere a man must be true to himself, he must be what he appears to be, and whether he changes his opinions or modes of conduct or does not change them, at every step and every change it must be

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

quite clear to his own conscience that he is obeying the very highest ideal he knows at the time. That is to be sincere. The word 'serious' also includes a vivid *sense of responsibility*, a feeling that life is a reality and not a jest, a time for work first and play second, a time for achievement rather than amusement.

This sense of responsibility must be so vivid that it will not be enough for a man to resolve in a vague way that he will try to do right—he must make doing right the one great aim of his life, the aim which overtops all others. The serious man will say to himself: I will make money *if I can*, or I will win distinction *if I can*, but whatever else I do, *I will do right* in all things. Once more, the serious man is always moved by *a wholesome fear of the wrath to come*, a constant dread of offending a holy and righteous God, a deep anxiety that when the end comes he shall not be left in the outer darkness.

Therefore the serious man strives with all his might and main to attain that condition of character which is the only guarantee of safety. All this is to be 'serious,' and such seriousness is one of the

Self-help in Salvation

plain marks of the attitude of the spirit which ~~works~~ out its own salvation.

2. *Simple.* This word has had a tragic history. The dictionary tells us that it used to indicate freedom from slyness and cunning, and the absence of all affectation; but in the life-and-death struggle of modern competition the man free from cunning has fared so badly that simplicity has come to be often thought of as synonymous with silliness. One of the good signs of the times, however, is that more and more constantly the word is being used in its etymological sense. In that sense it is used as a name for one of the elements in 'fear and trembling.' It stands for *the absence of all duplicity of speech and conduct*, all tricky ways that are not straight, however clever or interesting or profitable they may be, every style of speaking that has a bad double-meaning. It stands, too, for *the absence of all affectation of behaviour*, all 'holy tones' and 'pious looks' and 'unctuous ways' that are not natural. 'Naturalness is the first characteristic of Christianity.' To be transparent, to be honest, to be unaffected—all these things and more are

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

wrapped up in true simplicity, and a man cannot work out his own salvation with fear and trembling unless he cultivates this quality.

3. *Resolute*. That is one of the lordly words of human speech. It refers to the 'will,' that 'spinal column of the human personality.' It is a quality which demonstrates itself in many ways. One of these ways is in resistance to all forms of wrong. Another is in steadily doing the duty that lies nearest, in obedience to that 'stern daughter of the voice of God, who yet doth wear the Godhead's most benignant grace,' and so fulfilling a useful end in life.

Strong souls within the present live,
The future veiled, the past forgot;
Grasping what is with hands of steel,
They shape the future to their will,
And, blind alike to doubt and dread,
The end for which they are fulfil.

Souls are not won without resolute effort. There is a fine old story told about Ridley the martyr, who 'took some time in being burned.' When the wood at the stake was set ablaze Hugh Latimer said to him, 'Be of good cheer, Mr. Ridley, and play the man.' Ridley did play the man under the hardest condi-

Self-help in Salvation

tions. The wood was green, and the flames made slow progress; and Ridley said, not complainingly however, 'I cannot burn.' But he did burn, though with such sad slowness; and he burnt *with resolution*, for it is said that when the flames sprung on one side of him he leaned towards them that he might burn the quicker. That is the fine old resolute way in which some men have worked out their salvation. We are prone, like children, to cry out before we are hurt. We forget those stirring words of the New Testament, 'Endure hardness as good soldiers' and 'He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved.'

The working out of our salvation is a task so arduous and tremendous that we must inevitably break down if in this work God were not co-operant with us. He bids us 'work out' with fear and trembling, that we may strengthen our faculty for goodness; but He also bids us seek His grace that we may renew our strength. It is His voice that whispers within us the needed word of hope and the promise of final success. It is His Spirit which breathes anew within us the breath of life. Our attitude of 'fear and trembling' makes our spirits

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

highly sensitive to the impact of the Divine Spirit. Every time we have an impulse towards the good, every time we catch a vision of wider truth, every time we feel an accession of moral energy, it is because He is working within us; and if we only search for the 'Holy Grail' seriously, simply, and resolutely, we shall go from strength to strength, till we find ourselves translated out of all darkness into His marvellous light.

CONCERNING CHRIST'S
PURPOSES

PERFECT MEN
'A SAVED WORLD

PERFECT MEN

That we may present every man perfect in Christ.—
Col. i. 8.

THESE words have a special and technical reference to certain local and temporary circumstances and modes of thought. The word translated 'perfect' was a favourite word in the language of certain heathen priests famous in Asia Minor in the days of St. Paul. It seems to have been applied to those who were fully instructed in 'Gnostic' mysteries as opposed to those who were novices because they had just been initiated into the cult. But in addition to this special and technical reference it indicates for us the definite aim of all the manifold and arduous labours of the first and greatest missionary of the gospel. The whole sentence expresses the aim and goal of the gospel itself. 'To present every man perfect in Christ'—in every single phrase taken by itself there is an argument against the Colossian heresy. It is not, however, as an

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology
argument against a dead heresy, but as an indication of a living ideal, that it concerns us now.

It is the crowning glory of John Wesley that he rediscovered and made prominent in the teaching of the Evangelical Revival the old doctrine of the perfectibility of human nature. Dr. Stalker tells that one of the diamond fields of South Africa was discovered on this wise: A traveller one day entered a valley and drew near to a settler's door, at which a boy was amusing himself by throwing stones. One of the stones fell at the stranger's feet, who picked it up and was in the act of laughingly returning it, when something flashed from it which stopped his hand and made his heart beat fast. It was a diamond. The child was playing with it as with a common stone, the peasant's foot had spurned it, the cart-wheel had crushed it, till the man who knew came and saw it and recognized its value. The truth about the perfectibility of our common human nature lay hidden ever since the days of the apostles until John Wesley came and saw and recognized its value. 'As to its theology, Methodism takes the old theology of the Christian Church, but it takes one element which no

Perfect Men

Church has dared to put forward as a prominent feature of theology. In ours it is the very point from which we view all theology. Now listen: I want that to be understood. Knowing exactly what I say and taking the full responsibility for it, I repeat that we are the only Church in history, from the apostles' time until now, that has put forward as its very elemental thought the great central pervading idea of the Book of God from the beginning to the end—the holiness of the human soul, heart, mind, will. Go through all the confessions of all the Churches, and you will find this in no other. You will find even some of them blame us in their books and their writings. It may be called fanaticism, but, dear friends, *that is our mission.*¹

That being so, it is a mission which gets right down to *the root of the world's evil in every form*. It is a mission which strikes deeper than politics, for it deals with the men who make and who administer the laws, and the men who select the law-makers. It is a mission more fundamental than any programme of economics, for it touches the

¹ Professor McClintock, quoted in Curtis' *Christian Faith*.

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

men who are the sources and ends of wealth, the men who create it, distribute it, and consume it. It strikes deeper than any programme of social reform, for it deals with the men who make social reforms to be necessary. It is more radical than any question of capital and labour, for it is concerned with the men who hold the capital and who do the labour. Its mission is to strike beneath and behind men's bodies and brains, their actions and words and thoughts, to that living something called *personality, or soul*, which thinks through the man's brain and feels through his senses and acts through his will, and to cleanse *that*, reform *that*, regenerate *that*, and make *the man himself after the pattern of Christ*. 'The growing dishonesty of trade vexes the mind of the honest citizen to-day. But our trade is as corrupt as our politics, our diplomacy, perhaps our popular pulpit and our professor's chair, and no more. The wave of evil washes all our institutions. You legislate against adulteration, against fraudulent bankruptcy, against the dishonest importer, only to find the old fraud cropping up in new and more subtle forms. If man can be made to realize his true

Perfect Men

nature, and see that by every act of wrong he is doing as real injury to himself as though he were to thrust his hand into the fire, you get to the root of the evil as you never can in any other way. Men pretend to believe in cause and effect, but the trouble is they do not. In some way they think they will be able to dodge the moral law. It is the dream of a fool. Let the wholeness or health of man's life be restored, and trade will become what it should be, the conferring of mutual material services.¹

What, then, does it mean to make every man perfect in Christ? We shall take a big step towards a clear notion of what it means if we lay it to heart that perfection in Christ Jesus does not imply incapacity or inability to be tempted or to sin. John Wesley might be 'confused in his psychology,' but he was not confused in his insight; and to this day there is no saner guide on the subject than he. He not only very carefully avoided the phrase 'sinless perfection,' but he distinctly stated, first, 'There is no such perfection in this life as implies an entire deliverance from manifold temptations';

¹ *Spectator*.

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

second, 'These souls dwell in a shattered, corruptible body, and are so pressed down thereby that they cannot exert their love as they would by always thinking, speaking, and acting precisely right. For want of better bodily organs they sometimes inevitably think, speak, or act wrong.'

Furthermore, we must always bear in mind that 'perfection in Christ' does not mean to have attained the goal of moral and spiritual progress. John Wesley made this very clear again and again. Here are some of his striking words: 'A man may be dying for some time; yet he does not, properly speaking, die till the instant his soul is separated from his body; and in that instant he lives the life of eternity. In like manner he may be dying to sin for some time, yet he is not dead till sin is separated from his soul; and in that instant he lives the full life of love. And as the change undergone when the body dies is of a different kind, and infinitely greater than any we had known before, yea, such as till then it is impossible to conceive; so the change wrought when the soul dies to sin is of a different kind, and infinitely greater than any before, and than any can conceive till he experi-

Perfect Men

ences it. *Yet he still grows in grace, in the knowledge of Christ, in the love and image of God, and will do so, not only till death, but to all eternity.*¹

Keeping these two truths then well in mind, viz. that 'perfection in Christ' does not mean incapacity to sin on the part of an individual man, nor to have reached the limits of spiritual progress, let us endeavour to penetrate as near as possible to the heart of the subject. We have seen, in the course of our studies, that these two great truths are put in the forefront of the gospel: That God could not be God and remain self-regarding and self-contained, since it belongs to His very essence and nature to communicate Himself; and that the greatness of human nature consists in man's capacity not only to know God but to share His life, the divine life flowing into and vitalizing every human soul as it has opportunity.

There is *also a third truth* which became equally prominent in early Christian teaching as soon as the apostles began to interpret the significance of Jesus in the light of the resurrection. They began to see that the real significance of the individual

¹ *Plain Account of Christian Perfection.*

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

historic Jesus was something in Him which was not individual or historic, but universal and eternal. That to understand Jesus men must go deep down behind Jesus of Nazareth dying for sin and rising again by God's power. They must find in Him the explanation of creation and the explanation of history; all time, all space, all existence, having their solution in Him because *in Him was the fullness of God embodied*. In Him Deity and humanity were both together, not as two natures, but as one nature expressing both. In Him it was demonstrated that God and the human spirit are related and belong to each other; and in Him God opened up to man the possibility of union with Himself. Hence the apostles came to speak of the life of Jesus not simply as a series of events with an actual setting in the land of Palestine, but also as a mighty everlasting process, which they sometimes spoke of as the Spirit within men, sometimes as Christ in men, and sometimes as God working within men. What they meant was that if any man will surrender himself to Christ, though up to that time he may have lived in sin, and been absorbed in self and borne all the marks of the earthly, giving

Perfect Men

no promise of the heavenly life, through Christ there shall come to him life which shall transform him into a being of God's order, glowing with love, forgetful of self, and living a life in accordance with the divine order and purpose. Their message was that all may share this life, that all may be partakers with Jesus and through Jesus of the life of God. To be sharers in that life is to be what St. Paul called '*in Christ.*'

Now the life which was and is in Jesus is *sinless*; sin was and is foreign to His life. Therefore the man who shares His life is to that extent sinless too. To paraphrase some striking words of St. John's, there is a power in the man, a life-principle in him which is sinless, and whatsoever in him comes from Christ and is born of God sinneth not, and cannot sin, because it comes from God.

But a man may have little or much of this life according as he complies with certain conditions of purity of heart and openness of mind and self-surrender, which have already been made plain; and to be '*perfect in Christ*' is to have *so complied with those conditions that we receive the full measure of life in Christ*, and are delivered from

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

the power of sin and the love of it; and not only so, but our spirits are so purged and adorned that they may be compared with the great God Himself in some such way as the single sunbeam may be compared with the glory of the noonday.

To attain to such likeness is to be 'perfect in Christ,' and the gospel call is that *we should* reach it. It is a glorious call, and there must be something terribly wrong with men, they must be locked in worldliness, they must indeed be held down by dead things, if such a call means little or nothing to them. 'It's no use trying,' men say; but trying is the only thing that is of use, except that of which all real trying is born, namely trusting. Let a man believe in his high calling, believe in the power which works within, believe in the fact that God's ear is not deaf, that His arm is not shortened, be in earnest and fix his attention on 'perfection in Christ'; and unless he desires something else more than he desires that, what he desires shall most surely come.

And

With wider view comes loftier goal,
With fuller light more good to see;
With freedom truer self-control,
With knowledge deeper reverence be.

Perfect Men

We bless Thee for the growing light,
The advancing thought, the widening view,
The larger freedom, clearer sight,
Which from the old unfolds the new.

Anew we pledge ourselves to Thee,
To follow where Thy truth shall lead;
That truth alone can make us free :
Who go with God are safe indeed.

A SAVED WORLD

That the world should be saved through Him.—
John iii. 17.

CHRISTIANITY believes in no limitations. It is a religion of ideals and purposes beyond the moment. It reveals for our worship a God whose grace is boundless; it presents for our imitation a character whose perfectness transcends the limits of our imaginings; it propounds a programme which has no bounds inside the history and extension of the human race. When we are told that Jesus came that *the world should be saved*, we are meant to understand that the programme of Christianity is not merely to make 'every man perfect in Christ,' but to make healthy and vital and morally sanitary every department of human existence on every level of human life. Civilizations, empires, thrones, dominions, principalities, powers, governments, nationalities, art, literature, wealth, science, law,

A Saved World

trade, and whatever else is included in 'the world' He came to make morally healthy, health-giving, and health-preserving.

It is said that some of the most harmful delusions which have ever taken possession of the Christian Church have been partial ideas about the meaning and purpose of the work of Christianity amongst men. For centuries the ultimate meaning and purpose of the gospel was found in the world beyond the grave. Heaven and Hell were for men the great realities. The probation of human character upon the earth was the one vital interest for men. They saw human life, as it were, a brief moment in the face of eternity. In that brief moment the individual had to prove his moral value for ever and ever, and after that brief moment to meet the judgement of God. Hence the supreme work of religion was to prepare men for that judgement, and to fit them for happiness in the life to come. That conception of the mission of Christianity has been the subject of boundless satire in our utilitarian age. A recent novelist represents a woman in the East End of London addressing a Christian worker thus: 'I know what's what, I do;

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology
and they don't want your religion, mum. It's all right when they comes to die, but till they die what they wants is things to eat.'

In our day the eternal vision has grown dim. In some quarters it has vanished. This earthly existence has expanded its importance. Secular and temporal affairs fill the scene. Life on earth has become the great fact to be taken into account. The cruelties of city life, the injustice of the present distribution of wealth, the sufferings of the weak, the unfit, and the sick, the dirt and drink and prophanity of mean streets—these are the things which compel attention now; and Christianity is estimated by its ability to deal with the awful social tragedies which abound, and its success in removing them.

One effect of this change of vision is that many men lay a great deal of blame on the Church of Jesus Christ for the defects of its social service both in the past and the present. Many a youthful reformer who only woke up a year or two ago to the need for social reform brings tremendous indictments against the Church for its neglect of social reform. Such men should

A Saved World

read history more, and seek a truer knowledge of facts. Every single movement in Western civilization that has made for the moral and social sanitation of the race has come from within the Church. Every attempt made to-day to deal with the problems of drink and gambling and poverty is being led by men who have been trained within the Church, and who are inspired with the teaching of Jesus.

Another effect of the change of vision is that many men, some outside the Church and some inside, are anxious for the Church of Christ to give her sanction and adherence to a scientific theory of human progress and a practical method of economics which is known as Socialism. They tell us that Jesus taught the principles of Socialism; that His followers so understood what He taught; that we shall never get a satisfactory state of society, a new earth with a new stamp of man, till we have got nearer the socialistic principles of Jesus Christ. These are but samples of things that are said by many men nowadays; and they are calculated to do much harm because they represent loose ways of speaking, and therefore loose ways of thinking

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

both about the religion of Jesus Christ and also about Socialism. If it be contended that Socialism is a name for a system of brotherhood amongst men, then of course it goes without saying that Jesus taught the duty of brotherhood and the necessity of it, and further, that the Christian Church is the only sphere in which any real brotherhood is to be found. But if Socialism means a scientific theory for the organization of society and a practical method for the production and distribution of wealth, then Jesus was no more a socialist than He was a scientist or a feudalist. Any man who is serious with himself knows that Jesus Christ and His apostles made Christianity primarily a gospel of man's relation to God, of which ethics or men's relation to one another may be taken as a kind of by-product; and that so far from identifying Himself with any organized form of society, He cut Himself off from them, held aloof, and took up a position outside and beyond them all. Furthermore, every student of history knows quite well that the greatest disasters which have ever happened to the Church of Christ have come through the leaders of the Church identifying the gospel of Jesus with this or

A Saved World

that scientific theory. For example, in the Middle Ages the gospel was identified with Aristotelianism, with the consequence that the Church became the foe of all original thought and research, not only in theology, but also in the physical sciences. To this very day it is thought in certain quarters that a training in physical science is inimical to simple faith in the gospel, whereas nothing of the sort is true.

The Church of Jesus is organized for the spiritual ends of man, it exists for the culture of life on its inner and most spiritual side, its mission is to be the custodian and the exponent of moral and spiritual idealism. Nothing but harm has ever come, or in the nature of things can ever come, if official Christians make the propaganda of any scientific theory, whether it be a theory of physics or politics or economics, part and parcel of that great mission.

Nevertheless, Jesus did come to save the world, and that means assuredly to put right what is wrong in such things as 'parliamentary or municipal government, the great industries of the nation, the profession of medicine, law, and arms, the fine arts,

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

the courts of justice, the hospitals, the enterprises of education, the pursuit of physical science and its application to the arts of life, the domestic economy of homes, the daily work of all the toilers, and all that huge complex of secular activity which keeps the world up from hour to hour, and maintains society as a going concern.' *He is doing it all the time.* The plain facts of the process seem to be as follows: Jesus knew that the first thing necessary in order to save the world was to give to men an equipment of ideas. 'He came that He might bear witness to the truth.' He saturated the minds of His disciples with principles which are the ground of all brotherhood. He said that His followers would be able to do greater things than He did. He knew that the horizon of truth would widen out, that the light of truth would spread, and that as this took place more and more would be done to remove evil of every sort. He knew that in proportion as men became inspired with His principles they would become opposed to injustice, to corruption and tyranny in the administration of the law, and to everything which means weakness and misery to men. This is just what

A Saved World

has taken place, and it is *just what is taking place more rapidly than ever to-day*.

It is often said that there is less and less difference between the Church and the world. That fact may have a bad side, but it most certainly has a good side to it. It indicates that 'Society has absorbed into its living tissue a large measure of that moral and spiritual idealism of which the Church once seemed the solitary representative.' It is doubtful whether the very difficulties of the Church to-day do not arise from the fact that the highest ideal of which it has been the custodian and exponent is being absorbed into the general conception and practice of morality.¹ 'No one who studies the social developments of this time will fail to see that the custody of the moral ideal has already passed beyond every species of ecclesiastical control and become a social responsibility, in which the Churches share indeed, but share only as component elements in the kingdom of God. Wherever the eye may roam it is arrested by the same spectacle—that of men hastening to organize themselves, in this way and that, for

¹ Professor Alexander's *Moral Order and Progress*.

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

the common good. In the heart of these great communities, which if their sins were counted would seem so wicked, we may see the birth of an impulse like the repentance of the Prodigal, a re-awakening of the better self, a home-born determination towards the right throwing itself into conflict with many forms of wrong. . . . The Church as a power external to the world is ceasing to exist, while a new Church within the world, bone of its bone and flesh of its flesh, is slowly taking form.¹ The old corrupt order *is* changing, the relics of paganism *are* being weeded out, the entrenched evils of centuries *are* yielding. New revelations *are* coming. The horizon of light *does* enlarge. Men *are* becoming more humane, more spiritualized, more Christlike. God *is* at work in the world. Everywhere there *are* traces of His hand. He 'rules the fate of nations, makes little account of time, little of one generation or race, makes no account of disasters, conquers alike by what is called defeat and by what is called victory, thrusts aside enemy and obstruction, crushes everything immoral as inhuman, and obtains the ultimate

¹ *Hibbert Journal*.

A Saved World

triumph of the best race by the sacrifice of everything which resists the moral laws of the world. He makes His own instruments, creates the man for the time, trains him, inspires his genius, and arms him for his task.¹

God sent His Son into the world, 'not to condemn the world, but that the world through Him should be saved,' and Infinite Goodness, Infinite Purity, Infinite Love are at work in the world securing the mystic upward movement of the spiritual life of man, a movement which is destined to continue until the world is enfolded in the shining light of God.

¹ Emerson.

CONCERNING THE CROSS,
THE JUDGEMENT,
AND THE BETTER LIFE

THE SACRED PLACE OF THE MOST HIGH
AFTER DEATH: *The Judgement*
THE LIFE TO COME



THE SACRED PLACE OF THE MOST HIGH

But far be it from me to glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.—Gal. vi. 14.

THERE are two possible ways of approaching the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. One is to try to understand what men have thought about its significance, the other is to try to realize what they have experienced of its influence. In the one case we analyse and try to grasp theories of atonement, in the other case we try to place ourselves as far as possible in such circumstances and trains of thought as conditioned the living experience of those men who have felt the power of the Cross. The latter is by far the better method for average people for several reasons. One of those reasons is that there are so many different explanations of the Atonement that if we try to understand them we are sure to become intellectually confused. Another is that the influence of the Cross is one of those

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

ultimate mysteries which can never be satisfactorily explained in words. It is one of those vital experiences which get all the nearer to reality and truth because they transcend all logical explanations. If the influence of the Cross did not transcend logic and common sense then it could not be true, for logic and common sense have only to do with common everyday experience, and the experience of the power of the Cross is one of the most extraordinary experiences in life. We may lay it down, then, as a general rule that if any theory of the Atonement be logically clear, *the fact that it is so* is a distinct sign that it is an inadequate and misleading theory.¹

The Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ is the 'wisdom of God in a mystery,' and a 'mystery' in this sense means one of those simple experiences in life which can never be represented by any explanation in words, but have to be passed through in order to be felt and understood. Bishop Butler once said that it was not wise to attempt to explain the efficacy of what Christ has done and suffered for us, and that such attempts have

¹ See J. G. Romanes' *Thoughts on Religion*.

The Sacred Place of the Most High

plunged men into error after error, leading them to misrepresent God and to misrepresent the gospel.

At any rate, it is wise for us to leave the moral logic of the Cross on one side until we have experienced its moral power. Certain facts about it are beyond all dispute, and are independent of all theories.

One is that from the times of the apostles onward *the Cross of Jesus has exercised a tremendous spell upon the human mind and heart*, an influence such as finds no parallel in the death of any other good and great man whatever. More than a quarter of each of the gospels is occupied with the story of the death of Christ, and the days of Passion Week which prepared for it. The Epistles and the Apocalypse alike find their focus in His sufferings, which are said to do everything for sinful men. In those days the cross was the gibbet, and the most hideous symbol of shame known to the minds of men. We have all heard and read how that a century or so ago in this country the bodies of noted criminals were hung in chains at some of the cross roads, and how people used to pass the places with a shudder. Similar was the ignominy of the cross

Pèrmanent Elements in Christian Theology

at the time the New Testament was written, yet that Cross is the one great vision upon which all the books of the New Testament conspire to fix our thoughts. At the time the cross was erected the Roman Eagle was the world's great symbol of power. It was the emblem of a world-power which had carried on a process of conquest which ceased only when there were no more peoples to subdue. The soldiers who carried that Eagle were the men who nailed Jesus to the cross, and there was not a Roman anywhere who would not shudder at the shame of it as we should shudder at the shame of the gibbet, yet in less than three hundred years the Cross was exalted above the eagle, and the throne of the Caesars had accepted the rule of the crucified Man of Nazareth. Think how since that time the Cross has inspired the greatest painting in the world. It is a matter of almost common knowledge that the greatest art in the form of painting has been Christian art, that most of the greatest Christian art is devoted to representing the awe, the pathos, and the glory of the Cross, and that some of the paintings of the Cross indicate the high-watermark of the world's genius. The Cross has

The Sacred Place of the Most High

inspired some of the greatest music in the world. It is said that Bach's Passion Music is the finest music that Bach ever wrote, that the grandest Handel ever produced was produced under the spell of the Cross. It is well known that some of the finest creations in literature have been produced under the influence of the thought of the Cross. It is said also that the noblest and best ever called from Milton was called forth as he stood in imagination before the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Mr. R. H. Hutton, in his *Aspects of Scientific and Religious Thought*, says that a great part of the secret of the power and popularity of Tennyson's poetry is to be found in the inspiration he derived from the Cross of Christ. Lastly, call to mind the undoubted fact that for twenty centuries all that has been most saintly and most beautiful and most useful in character throughout the whole range of Christendom has been the product of the influence of the Cross of Jesus. This much, then, at the very least we can see to be true, that *the death of Jesus has a power over all who contemplate it which is not approached by the death of any other man in history.*

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

It will help us to understand the wonderful fact if we try to trace the experience of the early Christians in the matter. We have the materials for so doing in the New Testament. Certain facts stand out in the forefront. One is that if the early disciples had regarded Jesus as one of a number of good men who had died for their convictions, the death of Jesus could not have produced the effect upon them that it did. St. Paul, for example, with his elaborate education, must have known of many men who had died as martyrs to their convictions, and if he had regarded Jesus as another of these he would not have been converted. The fact was the apostles had come to believe that Jesus was God manifest in the flesh, 'God's own Son,' as St. Paul constantly called Him. How they came to believe that was probably through the resurrection. 'The fact that He rose from the tomb brought home the conviction that here was some one more than man who had lived their life and died more than their death, and yet over whom death had no dominion and no power, because He was the Prince of Life.' When they came clearly to recognize that Jesus was God Himself 'manifest in the flesh,' a super-

The Sacred Place of the Most High

natural embodiment of God's nature and purpose, a concentrated revelation of God, the idea came home to them that He had died not because He was obliged to do so, but because He wished to do so, and that His death was for the world, and was itself the appointment of God's love for the world. Thus *they saw God in a new light*. They saw that instead of being indifferent to the sins and sufferings of men He suffered on account of them right to death. 'Theology has no falser idea than that of the impassibility of God. If He is capable of sorrow He is capable of suffering, and were He without the capacity for either He would be without any feeling of the evil of sin or the misery of man. The very truth that comes by Jesus Christ may be said to be summed up in the passibility of God.'¹ When the disciples saw this the sight filled them with a passion for Jesus which knew no limits; and the one thing they cared about, the one thing which drew out all their interest, was the work of publishing the great evangel, east and west, and north and south, because it was the one thing men needed most to know, and the one thing that would do

¹ Dr. Fairbairn.

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

them the most good. And no man can think seriously of the Cross in the way the disciples thought of it and not be touched and moved and lifted by it.

There is much in the Cross that I cannot tell about.

There sorrow and gladness meet,
And the crossing of wills is there,
And the dying that makes life sweet,
And the life that makes death clear.
There at the foot of the cross,
In the highest type of his kind,
Man learns his gain in the loss
And his loss in the gain to find.

There is all that in the Cross and much more which can never be put into human speech. Beyond a certain limit it is foolish to attempt to put it into speech. The Cross is for our spiritual contemplation and not for our critical analysis. It is not a problem for our heads but a revelation for our hearts. When a man is listening to a perfect piece of music he does not begin a scientific analysis of the music he was listening to, or if he does he at once ceases to feel its power. If he is looking at some stretch of rich and suggestive scenery when heaven and earth are flashing with splendour, he

The Sacred Place of the Most High

does not begin a scientific discourse on the nature and operation of light, or if he does, he ceases to feel its beauty. So it is with the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is a picture which declares and measures God's giving of Himself in suffering for man's sin, and to reduce it to logical formulae is to spoil it. The occupation of the heart and mind with the Cross of Jesus is the secret of practical Christianity. The measure in which we meditate on that Godlike example of self-sacrifice will be the measure in which the thought of it will have power in our lives. If we try to see in the Cross of Jesus what the disciples saw, there will grow up in our hearts of itself a love for the Master which will become the master passion of our lives. We shall come to love Him because He first loved us, and our love for Him will be the channel through which a flood of living energy will flow in upon us from the eternal sources, and we shall 'be saved by His life' who for our sakes died and rose again.

THE JUDGEMENT

Every one of us shall give an account of himself to God.—Rom. xiv. 12.

WHEN that account is to be given, where it is to be given, how it is to be given, are questions of interest and of importance; but about these matters I have nothing to say. I want to look solely and to look hard at the solitary fact that accountability to God is one of the characteristics of normal manhood. That is one of those great truths which if dwelt upon mould the thoughts, stiffen the wills, and determine the lives of men. It is one of those great truths which the mental atmosphere and social conditions of our day make it hard for us to realize. Two foundation principles have always formed the basis of human society. They are known as individualism and collectivism. The pendulum of human thought has always been slowly swinging from one to the other. Sometimes attention is concentrated on the

The Judgement

individual. The worth and importance of the individual man to society is felt to be pressing in upon human thought with irresistible force. The individual seems to be the one and only reality, and all else seems but dust and ashes except so far as it tends to add weight and volume to the rights and the value of the individual man. So men thought for a hundred years up to the middle of the nineteenth century, and the minds of men were occupied with the task of obtaining freedom for each man, abstract rights, and human equality.

Since that time there has come a reaction. In our day it is not the individual man but his class or community which is the vital interest. 'We have become aware, as in a flash, that we are not merely individuals, but members of a community, nay, citizens of the world. This new consciousness is no mere intellectual fancy, but a hard fact that comes home to us in our daily life. The labourer in the slum tenement competing for employment at the factory gate has become conscious that his comfort and progress depend, not wholly or mainly on himself, or on any other individual, but upon the proper organization of his trade union

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

and the activity of the factory inspector. The shopkeeper or the manufacturer sees his prosperity wax or wane, his own industry and sagacity remaining the same, according to the good government of the city, the efficiency with which his nation is organized, and the influence which his Empire is able to exercise in the councils, and consequently in the commerce, of the world. Hence the ordinary elector, be he workman or manufacturer, shopkeeper or merchant, has lost his interest in individual rights or abstract equality, civil or religious. The freedom he wants is not individual but corporate freedom, freedom for his trade union to bargain collectively, freedom for his co-operative society to buy and sell and manufacture, freedom for his municipality to supply all the common needs of the town, freedom above all from the narrow insularity which keeps his nation backing "on principle" out of its proper place in the comity of the world. In short, the twentieth century finds us all, to the dismay of the old-fashioned individualist, thinking in communities and acting in communities.¹

¹ Sidney Webb.

The Judgement

Now it is a matter of common knowledge that corporations and companies which think and act in communities have neither soul nor conscience, and the danger is that what is true of the whole should become true of the individuals which make up that whole. When much is being done to cultivate what is called a 'world soul' and a 'corporate conscience,' it is almost impossible to retain that vivid sense of personal identity and personal responsibility which was comparatively easy to the men who lived in smaller spheres and in the midst of a simpler organization of society. The dominant moral drift of our epoch is a tendency to crush all that is individual in a man and make him a mere wheel in a social machine. The modes of thinking and modes of acting common to our day, and the conventions of our class, hem us round on every side, and tend to control our thought, dull our moral sense, blur the clear outline of duty, and reduce us to a state of adult infancy, of unthinking childhood.

Moreover, if we go behind the superficial and external conditions of modern life to the governing ideas of modern thought, we still find that the drift

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

is hostile to this sense of personal accountability. There is no idea more prominent in modern thinking than the idea of 'heredity' and all that it implies. We are forced in many ways into contact with it. We have learned from the great masters of physical science how close is the connexion between an individual and the past out of which he comes. They have made very clear to us all the transmission of tendencies and characteristics from parents to offspring in the development of the globe—that every person inherits not only features and voice, goods and possessions, but taints of blood, conditions of nerve, defects of will, and moral tendencies which go far to determine his moral condition. That doctrine is one of the corner-stones of modern thought and modern literature. Robert Louis Stevenson puts it vividly. He describes an old grandfather of his who was a minister in an old Scotch kirk. 'Try as I will,' he says, 'I cannot join myself on with the reverend doctor; and all the while no doubt . . . he moves in my blood, whispers words to me, and sits efficient in the very knot and centre of my being. And not he alone, but a broadening line of ancestors, stretching back

The Judgement

into the cloudy past, the toilers and fighters of earlier generations—Picts who rallied round Macbeth . . . Star-gazers on the Chaldean plains . . . and farthest of all, what sleeper in green tree-tops and muncher of nuts concludes my pedigree? ' No doubt within proper limits the idea of ' heredity ' and also the idea of ' environment ' are true and useful; but they have become so prevalent and powerful that under their iron sway we are very likely to drift into the belief that personal responsibility is a fancy, that freedom of choice between alternatives is a delusion, that our modes of thought are compulsory, and that we move by coercion of unseen forces.

There may be many ways of opposing this drift, but as it appears to me there is none so likely to be effective as *an appeal to the consciousness of every man*.

There are many ways of describing consciousness, but it is enough for our purpose to say that it is a name for the faculty a man has of knowing what goes on in his own mind. Nothing is more real to any man than that. In a sense it is the only ultimate reality existing for any man. The one

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

thing that any man can be absolutely certain about is what goes on in his own mind, and from what goes on in his own mind he can form some idea of what goes on in another man's mind.

Well, now let us try to examine what goes on in our minds in reference to this all-important matter of accountability. *First*, do you not feel as surely as you feel you exist that you are an individual? That you are just *you*, and you know *yourself* as apart from all the rest of the individuals in the world? Of course you are not independent of the rest of men, but still you are *you*. *Second*, do you not feel that however true it may be that you have inherited one element in your nature from one ancestor, and another element from another ancestor, and another element from a third, *you yourself* are different from all the parts put together? *Third*, do you not feel that whilst it is true that you owe much to education proceeding from parents, nurses, playfellows, companions, professed teachers, public opinion, law, knowledge, belief, custom, habit, and circumstances, and although these do much to determine the characteristics which each class or community

The Judgement

of men exhibits, yet *you* are essentially different from a mere mixture of all these things put together? I am I and You are *You*, and there is no getting beyond that. *Once more*, watching what goes on in our own minds, we find that we never on any occasion admit the plea of irresponsibility in the case of other people. If a thief in a court of law were to lay the blame for his theft on his ancestors or his circumstances, the judge would disregard his plea. The make of your nature compels you to blame other people when they do wrong, and you may talk as much as you please about inherited tendency and the coercion of circumstances, but so long as you blame other people for their wrongdoing it is quite impossible to escape your own responsibility. *Observe just one more process which goes on in your own mind.* Is it not a fact that it never occurs to you to seek excuses for what you are sure you cannot help or hinder? The shape of your head, the natural colour of your hair, the length of your body—these things are wholly independent of your own will, and you would never think of seeking for or urging any excuse for these things, nor does any-

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

body expect you to do so. That is so because you are conscious that you are not responsible for such things as these. But suppose you have a tendency to some form of evil, say a tendency to intemperance, or a tendency to impurity, or a tendency to untruthfulness, and suppose you yield to this tendency, in the hour of remorse you begin to seek for and maybe to urge all sorts of excuses, and by an impulse that seems irresistible you try to shirk the blame and throw it upon somebody or something outside you. But if you are no more responsible for yielding to these tendencies than you are for limping because you have been born with a short leg, why should you seek excuses for these things any more than you do for a physical deformity? It is surely because, while heredity and environment may determine the form in which a temptation comes to you, the issue of the temptation rests with *yourself*, and you are responsible whether you yield or resist. Thus the very fact that you urge such excuses as hereditary bias and the force of circumstances is in itself an indication that for yielding you are responsible.

It comes to this, therefore, that whilst as a matter

The Judgement

of theory it is impossible to prove that any man is accountable for anything, as a matter of fact every man knows that he is responsible for what he himself does. It matters not to inquire whether men have always felt like this. It is enough to know that they do so now. It matters not to inquire whether all men everywhere feel like this. It is enough for us that we do so ourselves. Whatever external voices may say, to our own consciousness we must give heed; and the final utterance of that witness is that we are responsible beings, and therefore accountable to some one.

Here comes in the fitness of the New Testament doctrine of judgement, according to which we are to *give account of ourselves to God*, and through His Son Jesus Christ, for God hath 'committed all judgement to the Son because He is the Son of Man.' It is only He who knoweth all things who can tell what elements in life really belong to *ourselves* and what elements others have contributed and for which they are responsible. 'If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart *and knoweth all things*.' 'He knoweth our frame,' and whilst society judges us, and can only

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

judge us by our actions, knowing nothing of the fierceness of temptation nor the weakness of our nature, which proceeds from the work of our parents, or teachers, or the spirit of the times, or the circumstances in which we live, *God knows all things*, and makes allowances for all these things, judging a man by what he is *in himself* and for what he alone is responsible.

That is the essence of the New Testament doctrine of judgement, and if we only hold it fast it will bring us real help. It will act as a check not only upon gross sin, but also upon aimlessness and lack of serious purpose in act and word. It will act as a stimulus for using whatever strength of intellect or income or time or influence we may have for the noblest ends. Last but not least, it will act as an impulse to drive us, not once nor twice but often, to Him who comes to men with plenteous redemption, strengthening them with all might most mightily in the inner man that they may be able to fulfil all righteousness.

THE LIFE TO COME

And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband.—Rev. xxi. 2.

THE immortal writer of this immortal Book of Revelation ‘in the spirit on the Lord’s day’ had a vision of a new heaven and a new earth. He heard a decree proceeding from the throne of the universe condemning the old evil order of the rule of Rome, with its oppressions and persecutions, its fanaticism and idolatries, and all those impious abominations which befouled the earth and ‘made human life a hell.’ In place of the old Jerusalem, deserted and ruined on account of the people’s sin, he saw a new Jerusalem descending out of the sky from God, fresh and clean and beautiful as a bride ready for her wedding. It was a city not only *from* God but a city *of* God, wherein God dwelt and all was stainless and beautiful. Therein death shall

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

be no more, neither mourning nor crying, nor pain any more, for God shall wipe away all tears from all eyes. There shall be no sin there, nor anything false or unclean. Winter shall not destroy its beauty. Night shall not cloud its glory. Eternal freshness shall abide in it. For sun and moon the glory of God shall brighten it.

It is a wonderful picture of perfect life, and it would do us good to contemplate it often in these days when we are obliged to give so much attention to the dirt, drink, immorality and profanity of mean streets, and to all that is so painful and hard in this life.

To begin with, let us lay it to heart that St. John never intended his picture of the better life to be taken as a statement of literal matter of fact. We have only to translate his language into the terms of modern dimensions to see how true that is. For example, he pictures a city foursquare, with a wall on each side 1,500 miles long, standing on a mountain top 1,500 miles high above the level of the earth. The wall of the city is 216 feet high, it is built of jasper, and its foundations are all sorts of precious stones, and the entire city inside the

The Life to Come

walls is built of pure gold. It has twelve gates, and each gate is made of a single pearl, so that the gates must be very small indeed or the pearls marvellously large.

One has only to go on stating the vision in prosaic terms like these to see that taken literally it is both delirious and absurd.

On the other hand, to read into the vision and all its details some spiritual significance is equally absurd, and amounts to reading into it the fancies of our own imaginations. The facts seem to be as follows: It seems perfectly clear that St. John did believe in a good time coming, and in this chapter he states what seemed to him to be the conditions of life in that good time coming. He does so with the help of ancient allegorical symbols, with which he had become familiar by reading ancient Hebrew literature—symbols which are too remote from our ways of life and modes of thought for us fully to appreciate them or to understand them. But beneath all these wonderful symbols there are ideas or principles for all men in all time, which can be put into plain prose; and I will venture to state two or three.

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

One of the first that arrests attention is that *the better life will be free from the hindrances to happiness and the limitations to achievement integral to life under existing conditions.*

There are two common words which sum up the miseries of life as it is. One of them is 'shadow' and the other is 'cross.' The one word suggests darkness and danger, and the other hints at such experiences as pain and poverty and many kinds of sorrow. The shadows of life are dark enough and the crosses of life are heavy enough for all men.

I have been reading lately the lives of two famous and noble men who achieved much that is grand and useful for us all, but to read of the way in which they did it and what they had to fight against is enough to give any man the heartache. Their names are George Matheson, the Scotch preacher, and John Richard Green, the English historian. One of these from the days of his early manhood was obstructed and hampered at every turn by the calamity of physical blindness, and the other had to do his work amid such poverty and ill-health and pain as would have broken any

The Life to Come

will that was not indomitable, and at the last he 'died learning.'

These men were famous men, but in the matters of the 'shadow' and the 'cross' they were only typical. Life under present conditions is full of similar tragedies. We all have to bear some share both of the shadow and the cross; and if there be one thing on earth it is hard to understand it is the meaning and the use of either the shadow or the cross. Some sort of explanation is given in certain quarters, but when the shadow settles down on a man's own life and the cross presses hard on his own shoulders all the answers of all the ages do not satisfy or make them much easier to bear; but if it be possible for us to look forward to a time when there shall be neither shadow nor cross, a life where toil and pain and weariness have no place and where the meaning of all shall be made clear, then at least we can be patient. 'For if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.' And the way of patience is the royal road to character.

Another of the principles which are to regulate life in the future may be called *the principle of*

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology
proportion. We are told that the length and breadth and height of the new city are to be equal; and again and again that symbolism has been used to illustrate the fact that in the future life shall be *broad* or *full of interest*, it shall be *high* or *full of aspiration*, and it shall be *long* or *full of energy*. In *Rasselas*, the only book of fiction Dr. Samuel Johnson ever wrote, he tells of an Abyssinian Prince who spent his life amid the refinements of luxury in a happy valley where there was no work to be done, and no disease or danger to be dreaded—a valley walled in on each side by impassable mountains with a narrow tunnel at one end guarded by a sentinel and closed up with a heavy iron gate. At the other end was a narrow channel through which a river poured its waters, but too narrow to admit a body of any bulk. The prince wanted for nothing, and had nothing to fear, and yet he was miserable, and he was miserable because the scope of his life was limited within the reaches of that valley. That story is a parable. To be perfect life must not only be free from shadow and from cross, but it must have scope. Under present conditions it is so cramped. Some

The Life to Come

lives are cramped because the bad health of the body stands in the way of achievement, and *life wants length or energy*. It is hardly possible to go into a cemetery without seeing a broken column as a monument. It is scarcely a Christian monument, but it is very human. It speaks of high gifts of heart and intellect blighted for want of physical energy. When all was promise

Came the blind fury with the abhorred shears,
And slit the thin-spun life.

Some lives are cramped because narrow circumstances stand in the way of breadth of interest. A recent writer asks the question, 'What is the explanation of that love of fiction which characterizes our age? Why does the multitude turn from the most instructive and attractive literature the world has ever known to consume its nights and days with works of imagination?' 'It is simply,' says he, 'a revolt against the commonplace of life.' There are a few people with variety in their work, with books and friends, with opportunities for changes of scene, yet even for such life tends towards monotony. But for most people life is just

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

one round of hackneyed duties. Think of all the millions of people who spend their lives in factories and mills doing one thing over and over again, putting a small part into a machine or working one small portion of it. Think of all the millions of women who live in homes of poverty amid petty and recurring cares. How they must need, even if they do not crave, to live in a larger and fresher sphere !

Some lives are cramped because the pressure of material needs bars out the consciousness of the reality and nearness, and the importance of spiritual things.

‘ Oh, where is the sea ? ’ the fishes cried,
As they swam the crystal clearness through.
‘ We’ve heard of old of the ocean’s tide,
And we long to look on the waters blue.
The wise ones speak of an infinite sea :
Oh, who can tell us if such there be ? ’

The lark flew up in the morning light,
And sang and balanced on sunny wings ;
And this was its song : ‘ I see the light,
I see a world of beautiful things ;
But flying or singing everywhere,
In vain I have searched to find the air.’

The Life to Come

But the fishes are in the sea though they know it not, and the lark could not live were it not in the air all the time. So every man's life is lived in God. Spiritual realities are always near. But the close and cruel pressure of earthly things is such that many of us cannot feel their nearness.

So is this life cramped and hampered and obstructed; but the message of Christianity—the message which has inspired the development of Christendom—is that there is a good time coming when all obstruction shall be removed and life shall be *unlimited in length, boundless in interest, and unrestricted in spiritual sensibility and attainment*, when ‘with all this earthly grossness quit, we shall triumph over death and chance and time, and find a freer, fresher, larger life.’

Another underlying principle of the better life, according to St. John's picture, is *purposeful activity*. ‘Therefore are they next the throne, and serve Him day and night in His temple.’ There is the more need to lay stress on this principle because for some strange reason the conventional idea of heaven or the good time coming is that of saints and angels sitting in monotonous ranks in some

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

enlarged cathedral wearing crowns and singing, and doing nothing else; whereas the experience of all time teaches that purposeful activity is the law of healthy life. In every life there must be serious effort for any sort of permanent happiness. And according to St. John's picture of the Holy City every man is to do the sort of work he is most fitted to do. It is to be a life where men work not to get their needs supplied, but because those needs have been supplied; not to secure wages, but because their wages have been abundantly paid; not to make their robes white and clean, but because their robes have been washed till they shine like lustrous snow. All work is to be so inspired by love and gratitude and devotion that it will never tire.

These, then, are some of the conditions of the better life: Freedom from all shadow and cross; unlimited energy and interest and aspiration; congenial activity which never tires. Surely that is life indeed.

But will this good time ever come for us? Is the Christian tradition a fancy, or is it likely to turn out a picture of reality? Modern science has

The Life to Come

blotted out the heaven of our grandfathers with a great mark of interrogation. The answer to that question is in two parts. *First*: The question refers to one of the three ultimate things, viz. God, The Soul, and The Future, for which no logical proof is possible, which are purely matters of faith. We believe in the better life, and whether we do so or not is a matter for our own choice. *Second*: Believing is not the same thing as taking for granted because you are not quite sure. True belief is never such an easy thing as that. True belief is very hard to hold. It is a great victory after a long battle. True belief rests not on arguments but on the practical necessities of life. For example: Supposing there were as many arguments against believing in the better life to come as there are for it, even then it is one of the practical necessities of life that a man must choose that side which makes the best of him and the most of his life. And surely a belief in the sort of future life indicated by the underlying ideas of St. John's picture does this, whilst disbelief does not do it at all. Belief in a glorious future where there is room and time to grow means for him who has it

Permanent Elements in Christian Theology

that his life has a purpose which embraces all the lights and shadows, all the events and trials that come to him. If a man really does believe in such a future he marches forward as to a land of promise. With such a belief the details of his life lose all their pettiness and acquire dignity; his sorrows and pains are not torture, but experiences pointing on to a state when there shall be no need for them. If life with all its shade and shine means something grand and sure,

Then welcome each rebuff
That turns earth's smoothness rough,
Each sting that bids not sit nor stand, but go.
Be our joy three parts pain,
Strive, and hold cheap the strain,
Learn, nor account the pang : dare never grudge the
throe.

On the other hand, if a man refuses to believe in such a future this life inevitably loses most of its interest for him. If only in this life he has hope, as Emerson put it, he is living merely to wear his boots out. If he denies that there is any lofty purpose or final development for this mortal life there is no reason for his doing anything seriously,

The Life to Come

or as Robert Browning said, 'To be consistent he had better keep in bed.'

This mortal life *needs* the inspiration of faith in a glorious future, and the man who holds it fast will find that the hope of heaven, like

. . . a smile from God, can change the world!
How we are made for happiness—how work
Grows play, adversity a winning fight.¹

¹ Robert Browning.

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